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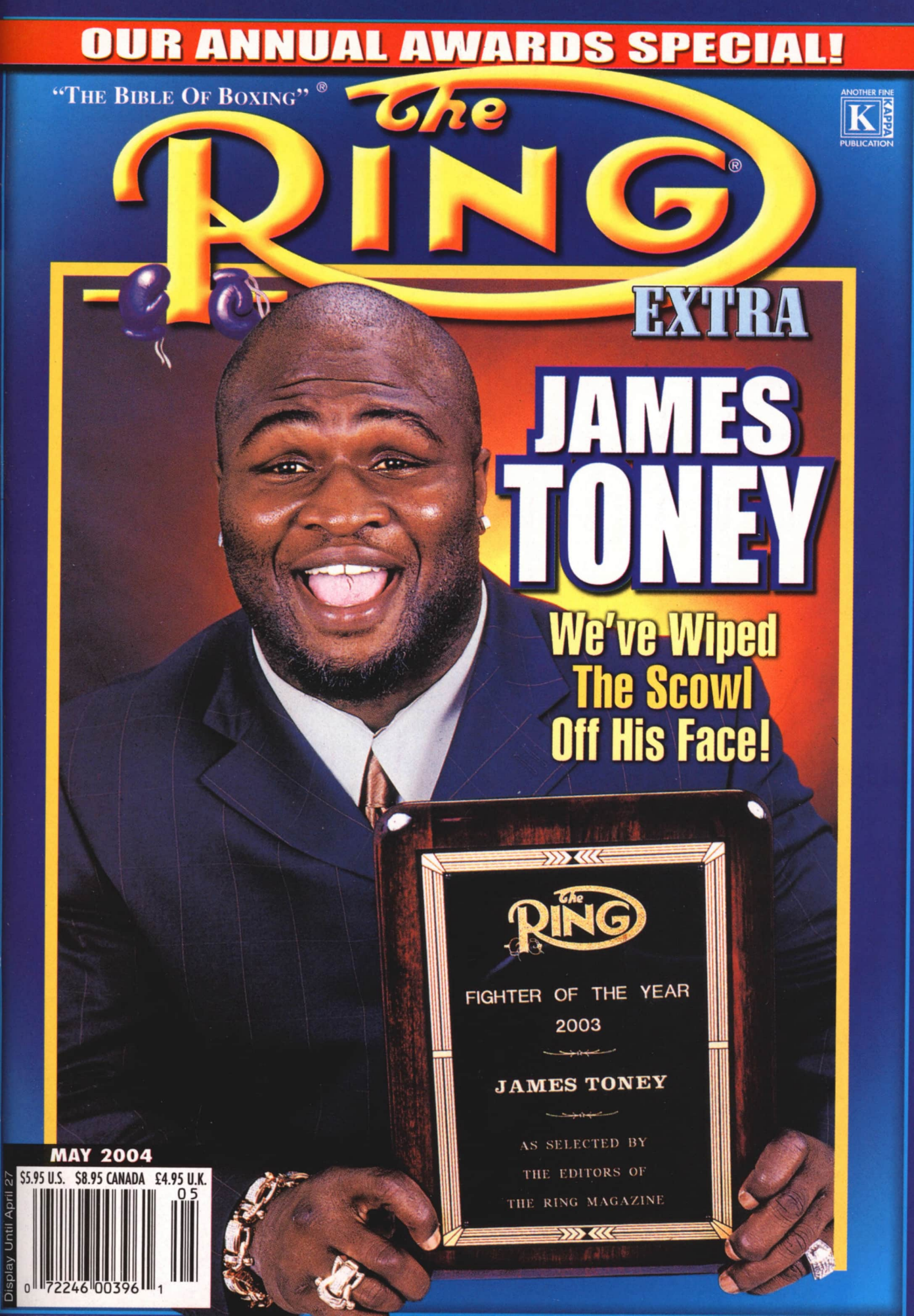

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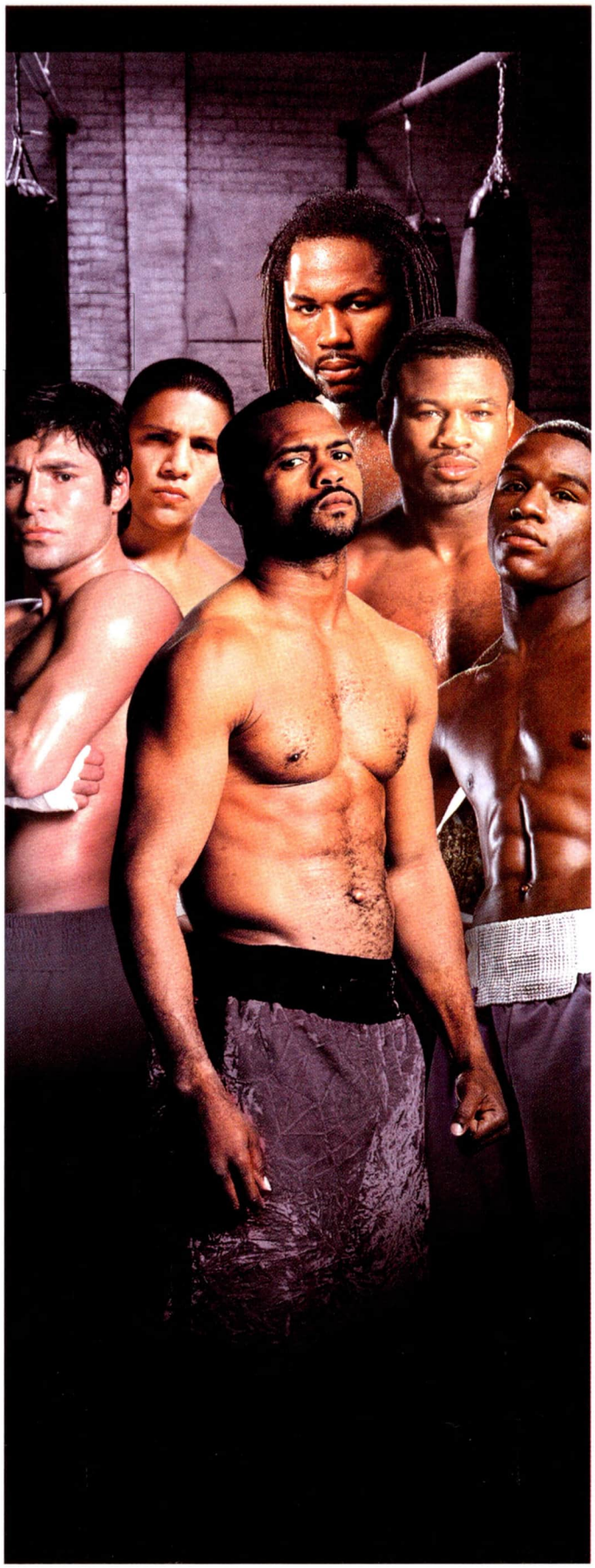

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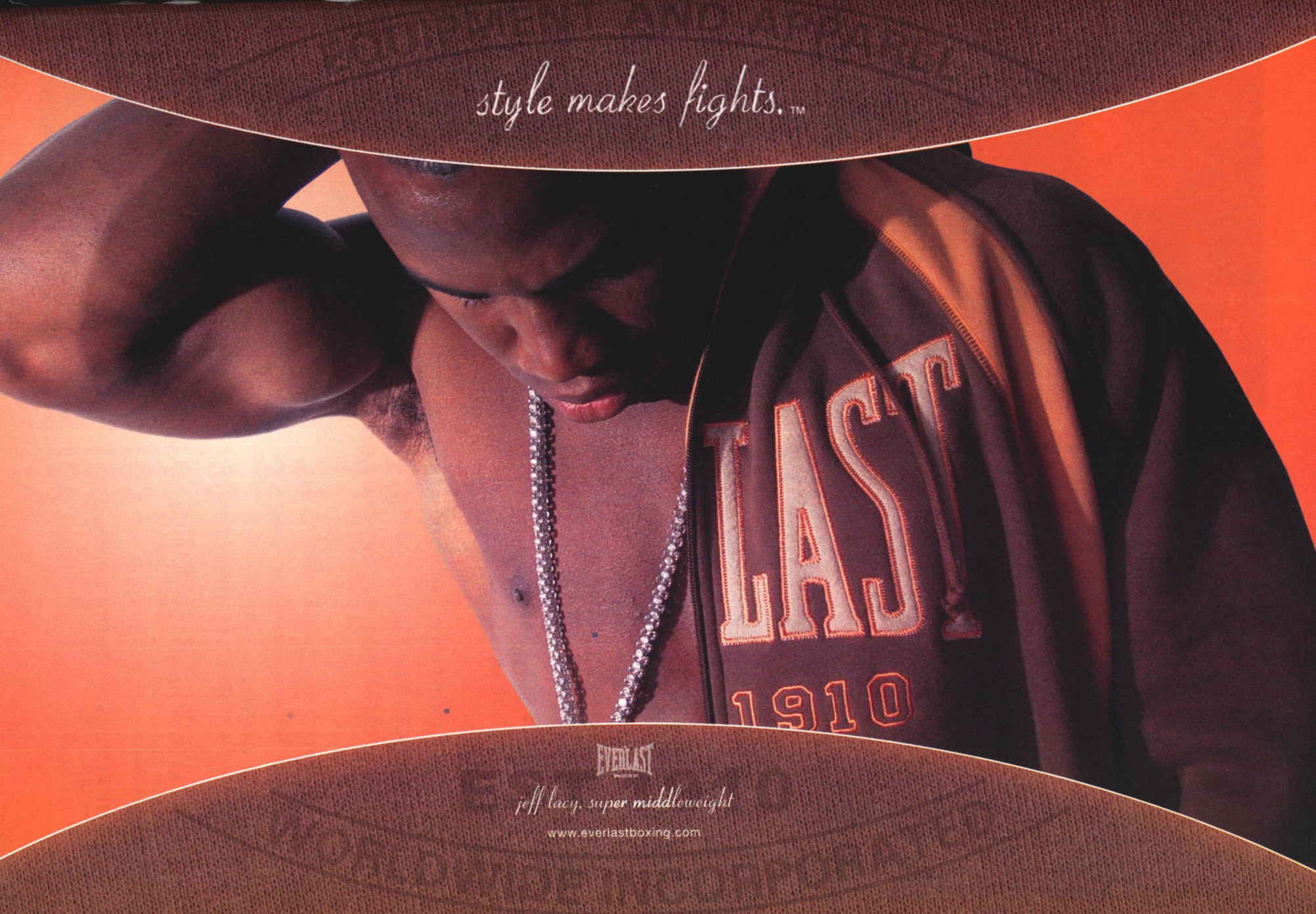
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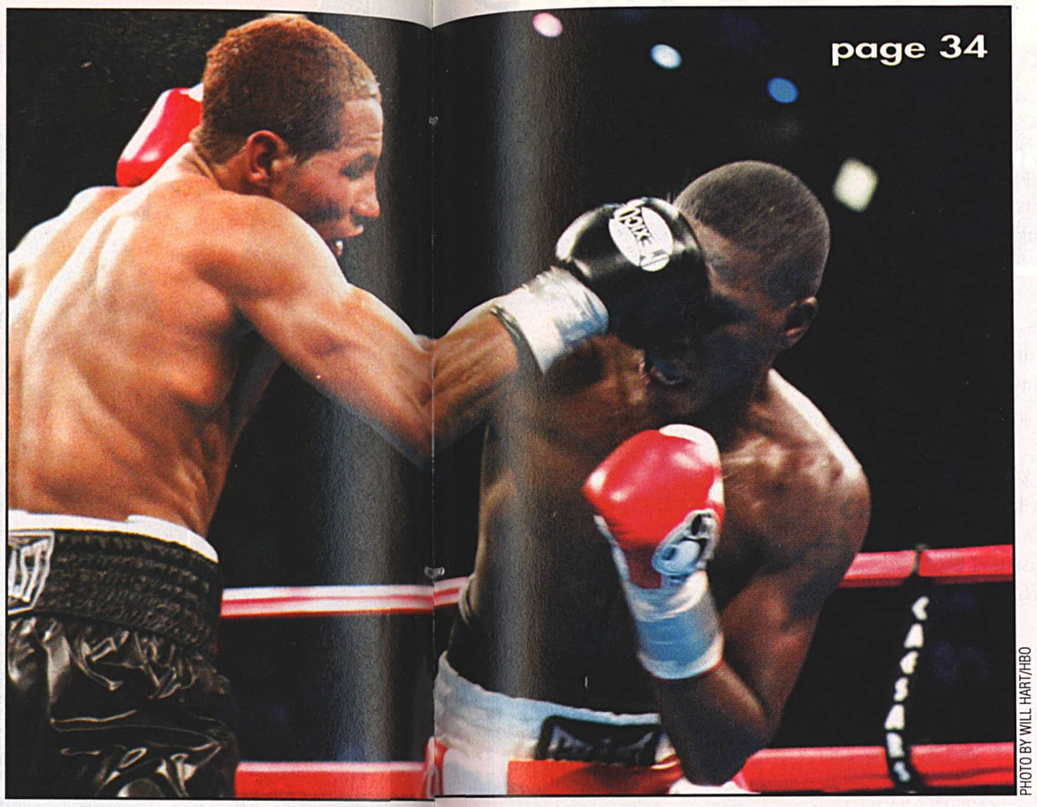

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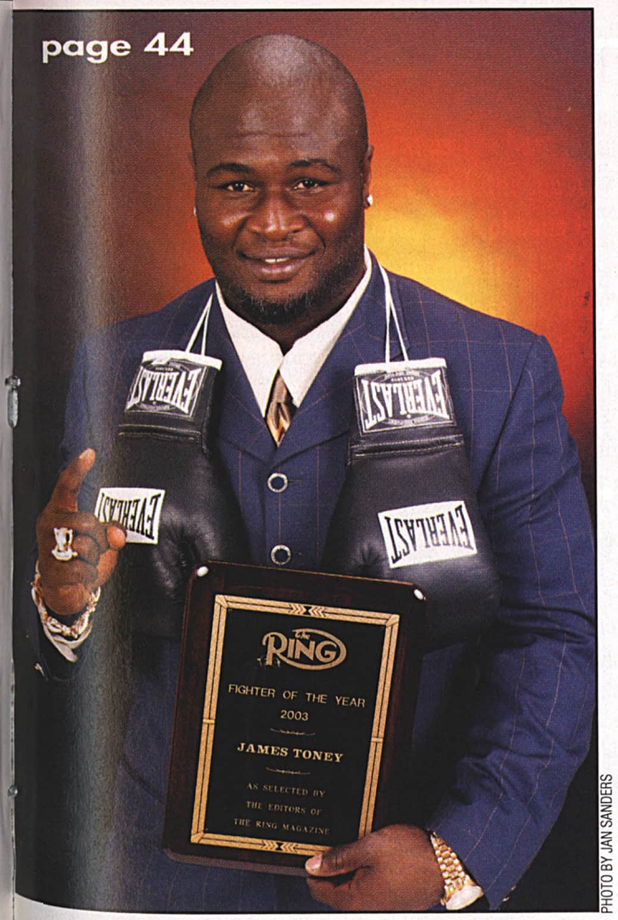

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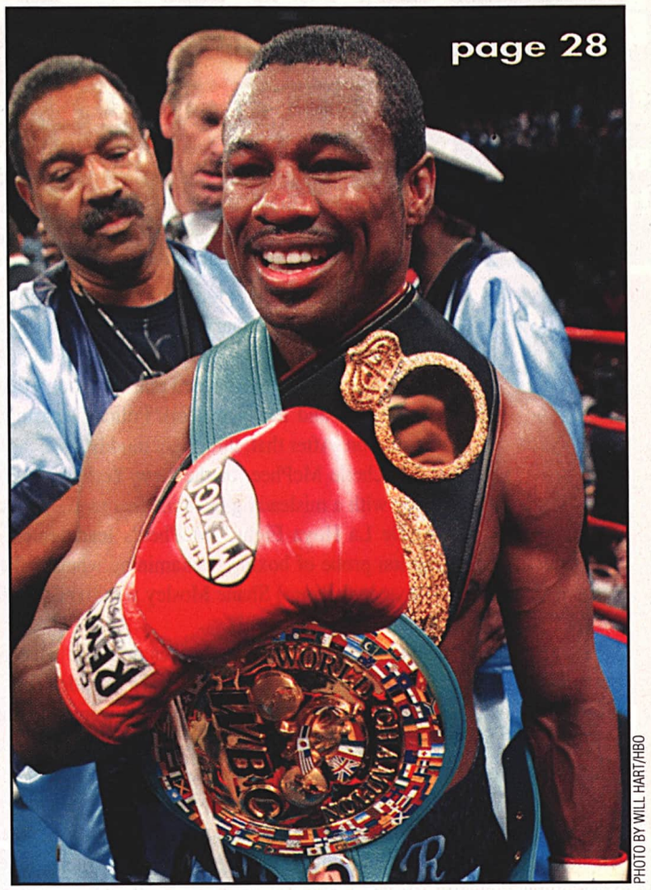

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RINGSIDE

What are we to make of the FBI raid on promoter Bob Arum's Top Rank offices in Las Vegas? While there will probably be more information available by the time this issue hits the newsstands, as I write this in mid-January rumor and innuendo far outnumber facts.

Yes, we know that more than a dozen agents swooped down on Top Rank on January 6 and seized computers, contracts, medical records, fight videos, and financial documents. We also know that the raid was carried out as part of a joint investigation by the FBI and the New York Police Department into boxing corruption. After that, things get muddy.

Michelle McPhee, of the New York *Daily News*, broke the story with a misleading headline that read, "Probe If Fix Was In At De La Hoya Fight." McPhee's lead sentence was equally disingenuous: "A corruption probe of boxing is examining whether the disputed bout between Oscar De La Hoya and (Sugar) Shane Mosley was fixed, the *Daily News* has learned."

Even the most naive boxing fans know that makes no sense whatsoever, as Arum promotes De La Hoya and in no way benefited from "The Golden Boy's" second loss to Mosley. Most likely, De La Hoya and Mosley's names were being used in order to grab the public's attention; the investigation actually focused on low-level fights and fighters who would not have garnered anywhere near as much notice.

The *Daily News* "findings" were picked all over the nation, so what the newspaper and its unnamed "law enforcement sources" accomplished was to smear the names of two honest fighters. But what do they care? They've got newspapers to sell and expenditures to justify.

But that doesn't necessarily mean that Top Rank isn't in big trouble. Besides Arum, the names of Top Rank matchmakers Bruce Trampler and Sean Gibbons (who was fired less than a week after the raid) have come up, along with manager Cameron Dunkin, manager/agent Robert Mittleman, and part-time site coordinator Pete Susens.

Apparently, an NYPD officer posing as a mobster infiltrated Vegas boxing circles 20 months prior to the raid in order to gather information of wrongdoing. He was aided in the ruse by Joey Torres, a former amateur boxer and convicted murderer who was out on bail and posing as the policeman's cousin.

While not a shred of evidence that Mosley-De La Hoya II was fixed has been produced, fights involving Butterbean, Jorge Paez, and Torres might very well turn out to have been less than kosher.

Mitchell Rose, who knocked out Butterbean at Madison Square Garden in '95, claims that employees of Top Rank tried to get him to take a dive. Paez' September 7, 2001, kayo of Verdell Smith in Mexico is also under suspicion, as is Torres' pro debut, in which his opponent performed so poorly his purse was held by the California commission.

Besides fixed fights, investigators are looking into forged medical documents, weigh-in scale tampering, and illegal transport of Mexican fighters into the U.S.

While it's way too soon to come to any conclusions, let's just say for discussion's sake that there were illegalities surrounding bouts involving Butterbean, Paez, and Torres, and that some people are ultimately convicted. Not only would such an eventuality taint the entire sport, it could also mean the end of Top Rank. Wouldn't that be something—one of the top promotional companies of the past three decades brought down by a pathetic attempt to prop up a trio of novelty acts that shouldn't be boxing in the first place. That's what I call super stupid.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 83, No. 6 **May 2004**

The RING

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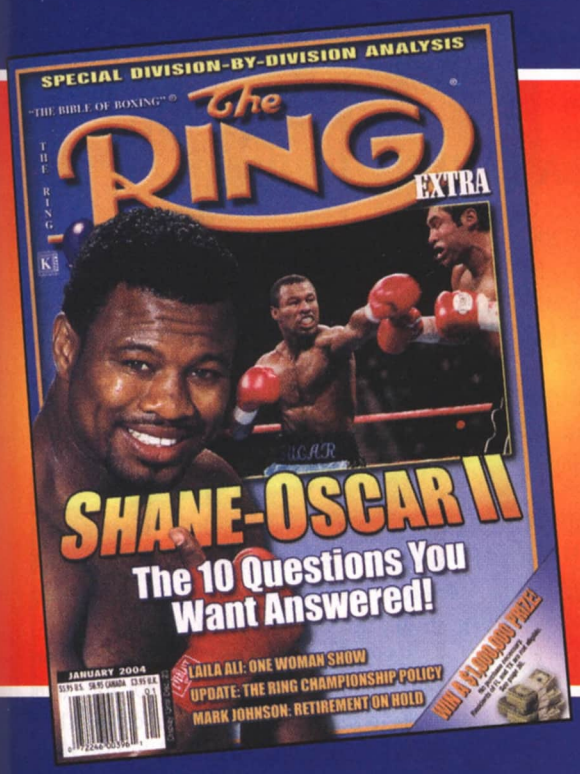

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ROUND ONE

A FORMULA FOR FAILURE

When ESPN2 announced in November 2003 that it would no longer pay licensing fees to the promoters who provide fights for the cable network's *Friday Night Fights*, it seemed to foreshadow the demise of the weekly program that debuted with such high hopes in 1998. Not so, claimed ESPN. The policy change simply meant that promoters would have to come up with their own sponsorship.

Industry insiders greeted this proposal with much skepticism, and few within the boxing community believed the new system would work. And now that THE RING has obtained the details of ESPN's new financial structure for its boxing sponsorship packages, it seems pretty clear that it is a proposal designed to fail.

It's not enough that the promoters will no longer receive a $50,000-per-show licensing fee, ESPN also wants to keep a minimum of 80 percent of the third-party sponsorship money the promoter obtains!

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

ESPN probably won't be beaming us the fights for much longer

ESPN is offering four levels of sponsorship, ranging from $120,000 for four fight cards to $850,000 for 12 fight cards. There are various price categories within these levels, depending on how many ad units, billboards, and logos the sponsor wishes to buy. But any way you want to slice it, the promoter ends up with a very small portion of the pie. For example, if a promoter found a sponsor at the $120,000 level, he would only keep $24,000 toward the cost of the promotion. For promoters who come up with less than $120,000 in sponsorship, ESPN is offering just 15 percent of the take.

Besides paying the fighters and commissioners, renting the venue, and providing insurance, which is the promoter's responsibility on most cards, regardless of whether they are televised, they will also have to continue to pay for TV-related expenses such as power, lighting, scaffolding, and 20 room-nights for ESPN's crew.

On top of this, ESPN would retain full ownership of the telecasts, which prevents promoters from making money by selling the show to other outlets via delayed broadcast.

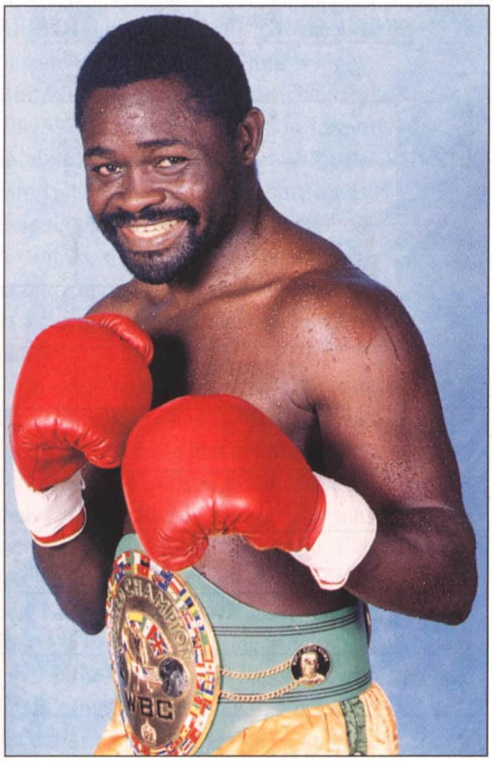
ESPN does say that promoters not delivering advertising will continue to be eligible for consideration to stage individual fights. But that seems like a fall-back plan, in the event few if any promoters can deliver sponsors.

In the long run, it probably won't matter what promoters do. ESPN has already decided it will air no fights in October, November, and December, which has never happened before in the history of *FNF*. And there are a lot of people who doubt that the network will be able to find enough promoters willing to work with them to fill in the schedule through the end of September.

Bottom line: Enjoy the *Friday Night Fights* while you can, because ESPN seems to have stacked the deck in a way that will prevent the program from being around this time next year.

—Nigel Collins

CANASTOTA OPENS ITS DOORS TO THE CLASS OF '04



Azumah Nelson

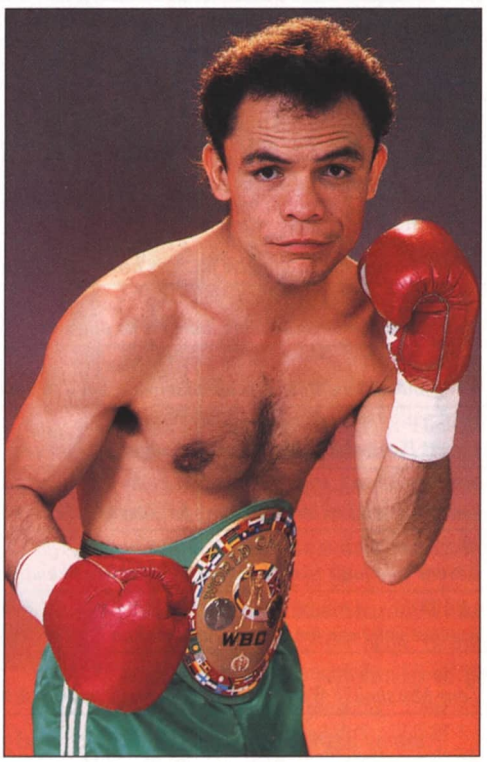
Boxing is having its problems these days, but nothing is going to ruin the good time of the fans who venture to Canastota, New York, for the 2004 International Boxing Hall of Fame inductions on June 13. And that goes especially for the seven living inductees, who, along with eight posthumous honorees, make up the Hall's Class of 2004.

Unofficially headlining the Class of '04 is **Azumah Nelson**, a three-time titleholder and one of Africa's greatest fighters ever. Nelson, a first-ballot selection, held the WBC featherweight title from 1984-'87, and the WBC super feather belt from '88-'94 and '95-'97. After a gutsy 15th-round stoppage loss to Salvador Sanchez in '82, Nelson won 19 straight bouts over a span of more than seven years, including knocking out Hall of Famer Wilfredo Gomez for his first title. Other top fighters "The Professor" took to school included Hall of Famer Jeff Fenech, Mario Martinez, Jesse James Leija, Gabriel Ruelas, and Juan LaPorte.

Also making it into the Hall in his first try is **Dwight Muhammad Qawi**, who reigned as WBC light heavyweight titlist from '81-'83, and as WBA cruiserweight king from '85-'86. "The Camden Buzzsaw" twice stopped Hall of Famer Matthew Saad Muhammad, and is also noted for a split decision loss in his classic cruiserweight bout with Evander Holyfield.

Others inducted in the Modern category include Los Angeles-based Mexican **Carlos Palomino**, who held the WBC welterweight title from '76-'79, and Mexico City's **Daniel Zaragoza**, who wore the WBC super bantamweight belt from '88-'90, '91-'92, and '95-'97.

"Since I retired, I have always had it in my mind that someday they would call me from Canastota," said Zaragoza. "This is now the ultimate honor."



Daniel Zaragoza

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

J Russell Peltz

All four of those recently retired fighters are expected to attend Hall of Fame weekend, as are the three living inductees in the Non-Participant and Observer categories. Referee **Stanley Christodoulou** of South Africa and Philadelphia promoter **J Russell Peltz**, along with posthumous honorees **Umberto Branchini** and **Lou Viscusi**, both managers, will go in as Non-Participants. Also, two writers, **W.C. Heinz** and the late **Barney Nagler** (both past contributors to THE RING) will be enshrined as Observers.

Four fighters who reigned during the first four decades of the 20th century have been elected in the Old-Timers category: welterweight champions **Young Corbett III** and **Jackie Fields**, lightweight champ **Willie Ritchie**, and featherweight king **Baby Arizmendi**. Also, lightweight **Billy Edwards** will be inducted in the Pioneer category.

For more information on the 2004 International Boxing Hall of Fame Weekend, contact the IBHOF at (315) 697-7095.

—Eric Raskin

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
12-5-03	Courtney Burton W 12 Francisco Lorenzo	ESPN2	l	B	B-	C+
Teddy and Joe: If a guy is off-balance and he gets hit and falls down, it's a knockdown						
12-5-03	Jorge Paez W 10 Scott McCracken	Telef	l	D	C+	B-
McCracken's late rally not enough to pull out win in spirited 10-rounder						
12-6-03	Joe Mesi W 10 Monte Barrett	HBO	h	B-	B	B
That rumbling sound you hear is Rocky Marciano spinning in his grave						
12-6-03	Vitali Klitschko KO 2 Kirk Johnson	HBO	h	A	B	C-
Johnson doing his best to give fat, lazy heavyweights a bad name						
12-6-03	Miguel Cotto KO 8 Carlos Maussa	PPV	jw	B	B+	B-
Maussa may be funny-looking, but he's no pushover; this says a lot about Cotto						
12-6-03	Ivan Calderon W 12 Alex Sanchez	PPV	s	B-	B+	C+
Never thought we'd say this about anyone, but Calderon makes Paulie Ayala look like Earnie Shavers						
12-6-03	**Lorenzo Parra W 12 Eric Morel**	**PPV**	**WBA fl**	**A**	**B-**	**B-**
Upset! Parra floors Morel in third, outfights him every step of the way						
12-11-03	Mike Anchondo W 10 Goyo Vargas	HBO L	jl	B-	B+	C+
Anchondo too fast and too young for Vargas, who has become the division's gate-keeper						
12-12-03	Audley Harrison KO 3 Brian Nix	ESPN2	h	C+	F	D-
Anyone who hasn't knocked out Nix, raise your hand; what are Harrison's people hiding?						
12-12-03	Kermit Cintron KO 9 Hicklet Lau	Telef	w	C+	B-	B-
Another good win for Cintron, who looks a little better every time out						
12-12-03	Fernando Vargas KO 7 Tony Marshall	Telef	m	B+	D	C+
Tony Marshall?? What, Kevin Pompey was busy?						
12-13-03	Zab Judah KO 1 Jaime Rangel	PPV	jw	B	D+	B-
All things considered, we'll take this mismatch over a boring Judah distance fight						
12-13-03	Travis Simms KO 5 Alejandro Garcia	PPV	jm	B	B+	B-
Anyone else think maybe Garcia could have gotten up but was hoping for a DQ?						
12-13-03	John Ruiz W 12 Hasim Rahman	PPV	h	B	B	F
We don't know what was worse, watching Ruiz and Rahman or listening to Sheridan and Byrd						
12-13-03	**Cory Spinks W 12 Ricardo Mayorga**	**PPV**	**World w**	**A+**	**A-**	**C+**
If Mayorga didn't annoy the hell out of ref Tony Orlando, maybe he'd have gotten a break or two in there						
12-13-03	**Bernard Hopkins W 12 William Joppy**	**PPV**	**World m**	**A+**	**B+**	**C+**
Maybe it wouldn't have mattered, but would it have killed Joppy to use his legs a little?						
12-13-03	Jeff Lacy KO 8 Donnell Wiggins	Show	sm	C+	C+	B-
Just the kind of tough, grueling win Lacy needs if he's going to do anything special later on						
12-13-03	Ricky Hatton W 12 Ben Tackie	Show	jw	B+	B+	C+
Excellent win for Hatton; now, how about a top guy already?						
12-19-03	O'Neil Bell KO 8 Derrick Harmon	ESPN2	c	B	B	B-
For what it's worth, Bell has firmly established himself as a top-five cruiser						
1-2-04	Cesar Bazan KO 2 Louis Brown	Telef	jw	C	D-	C-
Finally, Bazan gets an easy one; we'd hate to see the 13 guys Brown beat						
1-3-04	Kassim Ouma KO 10 J.C. Candelo	Show	jm	A-	A+	B+
Ouma proves he's ready for shot at junior middleweight elite						
1-3-04	Acelino Freitas W 12 Artur Grigorian	Show	l	A	C+	D+
What's Freitas always crying about? He didn't have to watch it; we did						
1-9-04	Nate Campbell W 12 Daniel Attah	ESPN2	jl	B-	B+	B+
One of the better lopsided fights you'll ever see; a good, tough scrap from start to finish						
1-9-04	Jermain Taylor KO 1 Alex Rios	ESPN2	sm	B-	F	F
Boy, we can't imagine why the ratings stink; everyone involved in making and airing this should be embarrassed						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World/Alphabet title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

FENECH ASSAULTED BY FOUR MEN

Hall of Famer Jeff Fenech required surgery on his face after being attacked outside a restaurant in south Sydney, Australia, in the first week of January. The 39-year-old three-division former titleholder had been dining with his family at a restaurant he part-owns, Enigma 88, in the suburb of Brighton-le-Sands when, upon leaving the restaurant, he had words with four men in a car who jumped out and assaulted him.

A deep laceration on the right side of his face was caused by one of the men who wielded a glass bottle.

"I'm fine now and that's the main thing, and I'd like to reassure my fans across the world that I'm all right. I've received countless messages of support and I'm very grateful," he told THE RING. "I had a bit of a laugh with the guys in the car before it happened and I didn't think at any stage that it would get out of control. Next thing I know they were on the sidewalk and I saw one of them crack me with a bottle. Part of my face was hanging off and there was blood everywhere. It was quite severe."

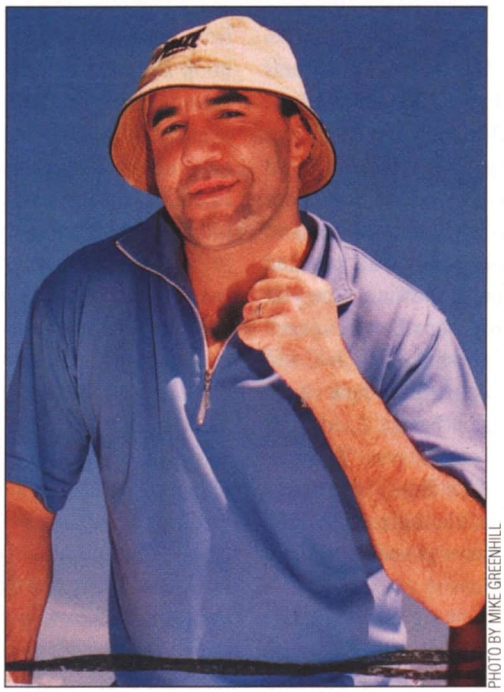


PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Fenech wants to teach his assailants to box

A 20-year-old Sydney man, Khaled Nagi, was arrested by police and made a brief appearance in the Burwood Local Court, pleading not guilty to four charges including maliciously wounding in company, assault occasioning actual bodily harm, and affray. He was granted bail on the condition he report to Bankstown Police Station twice a week and notify police if changing address. He was also warned to remain at least 500 meters from Fenech and his restaurant. Initially, Fenech expressed the desire to have revenge on the men who attacked him, but he subsequently declined to be a witness in the police case against Nagi.

"When I spoke out in the immediate aftermath, I had half my face hanging on my neck and blood all over my shirt, but I feel now that these kids need help," Fenech reflected. "I want to teach them to take their aggression out on a punchbag in the gym."

Police prosecutor Sharon Walker did not oppose bail for Nagi, despite acknowledging the seriousness of the allegations and expressing "concerns that there may be repercussions against the alleged victim."

Fenech, who retired in 1996 with a 28-3-1 (21) record, noted the quirk of fate that saw him make it through a boxing career relatively unmarked, then become scarred in retirement. The boxing community hopes that there are no more scars to follow for "The Marickville Mauler."

—Brian Doogan

YOSHIO SHIRAI, 1923-2003

Shirai: Japan's first champ dies at age 80

If it hadn't been for Dr. Alvin R. Cahn, Yoshio Shirai, who died on December 26, 2003, at the age of 80, probably would not have become Japan's first world champion. Cahn, an American college professor, was a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy during World War II, based in Tokyo during the occupation.

They met by chance when Shirai returned home after serving as a naval aviation mechanic during the war. Cahn, who had no prior experience in boxing, helped Shirai overcome a painful rheumatic condition by devising a series of punching combinations. Things escalated from there, as Cahn encouraged Shirai to employ scientific boxing technique, something that was frowned upon by most Japanese trainers of the era.

"He was a one-man revolution," said Cahn. "He refused to be a slugger. He saw no sense in being pounded on without defending himself."

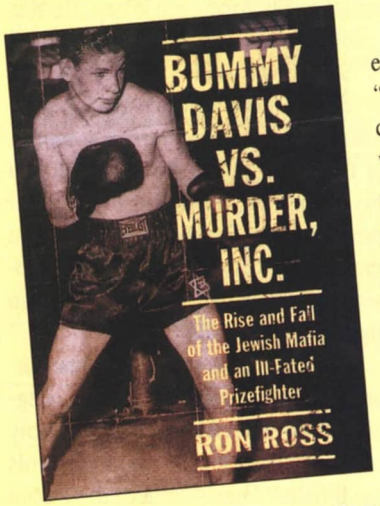
With Cahn as his manager, Shirai won the world flyweight title via 15-round decision over Dado Marino in front of 45,000 fans at Tokyo's Korakuen Stadium on May 19, 1952, and became a national hero.

Shirai made four successful defenses before losing the title to Pascual Perez on November 26, 1954. He retired after failing in a bid to regain the title from Perez the following year, leaving an overall pro record of 47-8-2 (20).

After his ring career was over, Shirai became a commentator and a boxing coach, and in 1995 established the Shirai-Gushiken Gym, along with former WBA junior flyweight titleholder Yoko Gushiken.

—Nigel Collins

BOXING BOOKSHELF BONUS



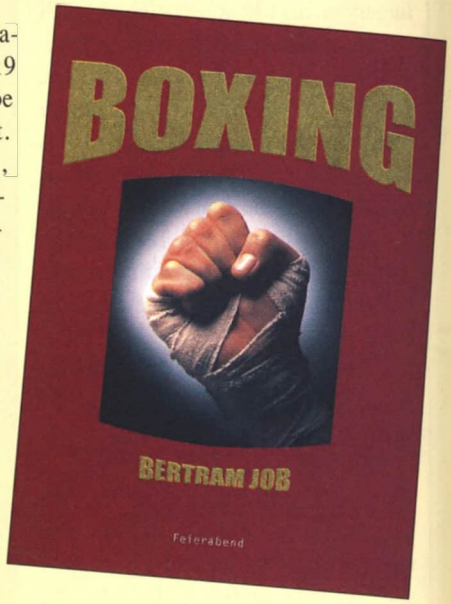
Until now, if you wanted to find out about Al "Bummy" Davis, a ferocious lightweight and welterweight contender of the late-1930s and early-'40s who knocked out Bob Montgomery in one round and engaged in an infamous foul-fest with welterweight champion Fritzie Zivic, your best bet was "Brownsville Bum," the much-anthologized piece by W.C. Heinz praised by Jimmy Breslin as the best sports feature ever written.

Now comes a worthy companion to the Heinz piece in *Bummy Davis vs. Murder, Inc.: The Rise And Fall Of The Jewish Mafia And An Ill-Fated Prizefighter* (St. Martin's Press, 418 pages, soft cover, $26.95), a thoroughly captivating, entertaining, and expertly layered account of the life, career, and death of a man author Ron Ross portrays as one of the most misunderstood and misrepresented boxers of all-time. It's also a biography of the 2½ miles called Brownsville, the spawning ground not only of great fighters, but also of the Jewish Mafia, whose leading local gonif, Abe "Kid Twist" Reles, didn't scare the boxer born Albert Davidoff a whit. In fact, according to Ross, Murder Inc.'s stranglehold on Brownsville was broken, at least in spirit, by the chutzpah of the Brownsville Bum, a misnomer apparently on a par with "Honest [insert any politician's name here]."

Ross' book reads like a novel, and when you read in the Author's Note in back that he "invented much of [the characters'] dialogue," there is the worry that maybe a little too much license was taken to de-Tysonize someone whose own brother was one of Brownsville's most feared denizens. But Ross spent nine years doing research and interviewing everybody he could find who knew Davis personally and knew about him, and the result is convincing and impressive enough to even overcome my personal aversion to the use of exclamation points as punctuation except in quotations. A "Glossary Of Yiddish Words And Phrases" in the back is helpful and fun, as well.

Bummy Davis never wore a championship belt, but there might be a few who have who would trade theirs to be the subject of such an enthralling and skillfully written book.

—Pete Ehrmann



Because German journalist Bertram Job views the entire spectrum of boxing as a "unique microcosm," he set out to write a comprehensive, international overview of the sport that would appeal to boxing fans as much as the mainstream public. To say he has outdone himself with the beautifully bound coffee table book *Boxing* (Feierabend Verlag OHG, 419 pages, $49) would be an understatement. From a historical, journalistic, and photographic perspective, *Boxing* is quite possibly the best book ever written on the sport.

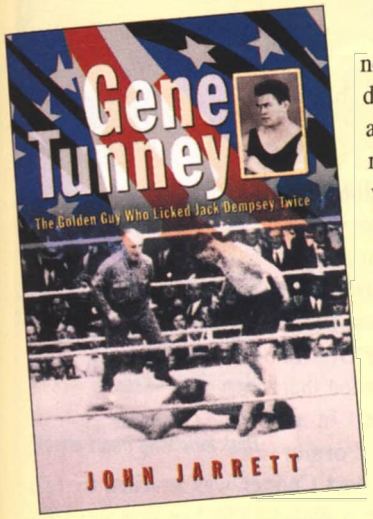
A diehard fan, Job dispels the notion that there is nothing new that can be said about the Sweet Science. Over the course of three years, he traversed the globe to research every imaginable, and even unimaginable, aspect of boxing, including the history, training, equipment, prefight and postfight rituals, and business end, as well as the fights and the fighters, champions and contenders, journeymen, losers, and has-beens, characters and criminals.

While Job is no lightweight as a writer, he also had such renowned journalists as Steve Farhood, Bert Blewett, and Ivan Goldman contribute to the rich text. The results speak for themselves. It is hard to imagine a better-researched or more entertaining read than *Boxing*. With each page it becomes more and more apparent that Job's massive undertaking was a labor of love. His hard work has paid off because there is nothing not to like about this book. For anyone who loves, or even just likes boxing, the book is a must. Anyone else who just enjoys great sports compendiums won't love it any less. There is little doubt that in the future this will be the boxing book by which all others are measured.

—Robert Mladinich

If author John Jarrett had looked beneath Gene Tunney's All-American image, he might have discovered something more intriguing than what we get in *Gene Tunney: The Golden Guy Who Licked Jack Dempsey Twice* (Robson Books, 285 pages, hardcover, £16.95), an old-fashioned sports biography that reads like a story from *The Saturday Evening Post*.

Jarrett is good at capturing what we already know about Tunney, the priggish ex-Marine famous for his deft footwork, his love of Shakespeare, and his fighting spirit. But as admirable as Tunney may have been, Jarrett can't make him compelling. He offers no insight as to how the wholesome, self-confident Tunney ended up an old alcoholic, and glosses over the fact that Tunney's daughter spent most of her life in a home for the criminally insane.



Did madness run in Tunney's family? Is that why he drank? How did Tunney feel about the poor treatment he received from most sportswriters? Surely some surviving members of Tunney's family could have helped with his story, but Jarrett isn't a probing biographer. He's more comfortable quoting ringside reports from the cigar-puffing newspapermen of the day.

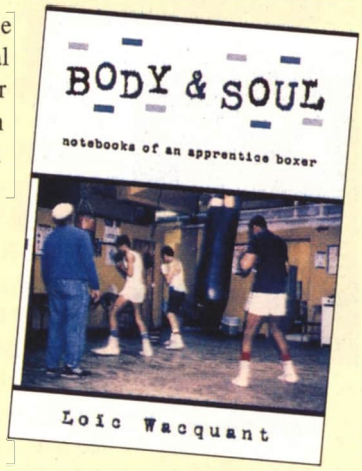
Jarrett, a longtime contributor to British boxing magazines, is fortunate that Tunney's life had an interesting supporting cast. The book is worth reading if only for the chance to meet people like Max "Boo Boo" Hoff, the Philadelphia mobster who kept appearing in Tunney's life, and Erminio Spalla, the Italian heavyweight turned opera singer. And long after we've closed the book, it's Harry Greb who stays in our memory. With his flying fists, his handy jar of pomade, and his sickly bride, Greb steals the show like a veteran boxer stealing a round.

—Don Stradley

Over the past several decades, boxing has become an increasingly fascinating subject among scholars in search of fresh research material, and on occasion a book will make its way from the ivory towers to provide some mainstream appeal. *Body And Soul: Notebooks Of An Apprentice Boxer* (Oxford University Press, 274 pages, hardback, $25) can be considered the latest to join that ever-growing canon.

What makes this volume unique from other typically detached academic fare is found in the author, French sociologist Loic Wacquant, and the unlikely passion he developed for the sport while engaged in field work during his Ph.D. studies in the early-'90s at the University of Chicago. In search of a unique vantage point from which to study the city's inner-city black ghetto culture, Wacquant, now a professor of sociology at University of California, Berkley, decided to join the Woodlawn Boys Club boxing gym, immersing himself in the pugilistic craft while engendering the respect and trust of his gym mates, most all of whom inhabited Chicago's South Side and its uncompromising world of crime and poverty.

But a funny thing happened to Wacquant while undertaking this unique form of embedded sociology. He was bitten by boxing's feverish contagion, and at one point, contemplated abandoning academia to pursue a prize fighting career full-time. Fortunately for the world of social science, common sense prevailed, and Wacquant has since gone on to produce a body of highly acclaimed work in the field, including *Body And Soul* in which he intimately recounts his three-year tenure at Woodlawn where he learned under the paternal aegis of veteran trainer DeeDee Armour (to whom the book is dedicated with great affection).



The book is divided into three parts and can be read chronologically, or experienced as separate and unique narratives. "The Street And The Ring" is a densely academic exploration of the discipline of boxing, and the role of the gym as a place of sanctuary and social camaraderie when juxtaposed against the violent realities of the ghetto. Readers may find the text inaccessible at times with enough obscure scholarly references and cumbersome academic prose to keep them reaching for the dictionary every few paragraphs.

Fortunately, the tone shifts toward literary journalism in the next two essays, which provides a much more seamless and fascinating read. In part two, "Fight Night At Studio," Wacquant goes in-depth to describe the events leading to a minor fight card at a local night club featuring Curtis Strong, a promising lightweight at the time whom the author befriended at Woodlawn. In the third part, "Busy Louie In The Ring," the author captures all the anxiety and adrenaline of competition as he recounts his own foray into battle at the Chicago Golden Gloves tournament.

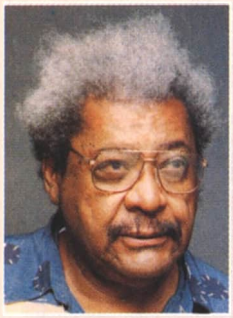
The book's real treasure can be found in Wacquant's generous field notes that he diligently transcribes to capture both the atmosphere of the gym and the language and culture of the boxers who find refuge in its environs.

In painstaking detail, Wacquant re-creates the vernacular and cadences of the street to lend authenticity to the fighters' commentaries on subjects as wide ranging as sparring and making weight, to the overall harsh socio-economic experience of life in the South Side (including one shocking anecdotal account of a boxer's involvement in a random street shooting).

Readers looking for an original interpretation on boxing and its cultural significance, particularly with respect to the poorest of the working class, will definitely find it rewarding to wade through some of the initial academic jargon to find *Body And Soul* a fresh and authoritative treatment. And anyone who has long held a love affair with the sport will find instant empathy with the author's own unqualified enthusiasm for the game. But be warned: Those who enjoy an unlabored read may opt to give the first part a cursory scan and skip over to the second and third essays. And if you've cringed at the thought of reading an intellectual treatise since your college days, you may want to pass on this one altogether.

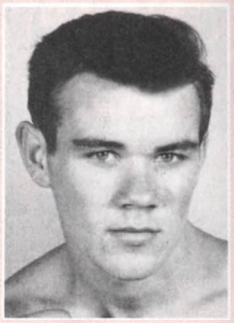
—Paul Salgado

OUTSIDE THE ROPES



King: A long December

Terry Norris scored a major victory for fighters in early-December, when promoter **Don King** settled with the three-time former junior middleweight titlist to the tune of $7.5-million. Norris was suing King and former manager **Joe Sayatovich** for breaching their duties to him by making side deals and paying Norris less than his contract minimums. After a lengthy trial, King finally settled when the jury, attempting to reach a verdict, asked the judge for a calculator. Despite settling, King continues to insist he didn't cheat Norris ... In other King news: The Hall of Fame promoter withdrew his application for a promoter's license in New Jersey in late-December, allegedly after being told he'd have to make sworn statements about his dealings with the IBF and its convicted ex-president, **Bob Lee**; **Hector Perez**, the former trainer of **Ricardo Mayorga**, sued King and son **Carl King** in mid-December for alleged racial discrimination in trying to replace Perez with **Emanuel Steward**; and King signed veteran junior middleweight **Bronco McKart** to a promotional contract in mid-December ... Following King's massive December 13 fight card in Atlantic City, a 32-year-old Maryland man, **Keith J. Butler,** was stabbed to death as he exited Boardwalk Hall. No suspects had been arrested as of press time ... **Johnny Tapia** was hospitalized (yet again) in mid-December, but despite rumors of a drug overdose, Tapia said his one-night hospital stay was caused by an allergic reaction to a cough medicine that contained codeine ... Insisting he wanted to spend more time with his family, **George Foreman** left his broadcasting job with HBO following their December 6 telecast, after he and HBO were unable to come to terms on a new deal scaling back the number of shows he would work ... Heavyweight **Kirk Johnson**, whose name isn't exactly synonymous with victory these days, won a legal fight in late-December. Johnson was awarded $10,000 plus legal and travel expenses when the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission ruled that he was discriminated against in an April 1998 traffic stop ... Former heavyweight title challenger **Bert Cooper** was attacked by two men wielding baseball bats at a Philadelphia bus stop in early-December, suffering a broken foot and facial swelling ... British heavyweight **Herbie Hide** was fined £750 (approximately $1,365) in early-January for pulling a kitchen knife during a brawl at a night club ... Promoter **Murad Muhammad** signed super middleweight contender **Antwun Echols** to a promotional deal in mid-December, following Echols' successful break from Banner Promotions ... Japanese doctors appear to have saved the life of Filipino boxer **Alvin Felisilda**, who had lost consciousness following his November kayo loss to **Hozumi Hasegawa**. The doctors removed a portion of the 21-year-old Felisilda's skull, and the fighter is expected to make a strong recovery ... Former lightweight, welterweight, and middleweight contender **Del Flanagan** of St. Paul, Minnesota, died in late-December at age 75 from complications of a heart attack suffered two weeks earlier. Flanagan, who fought from 1947-'64, compiling a record of 105-22-2 (37) with 1 no-contest, faced seven world champions in his career, but never got a title shot. He was inducted into the California-based World Boxing Hall of Fame in 2003.



Flanagan: Dies following heart attack

THE PUNCHLINES

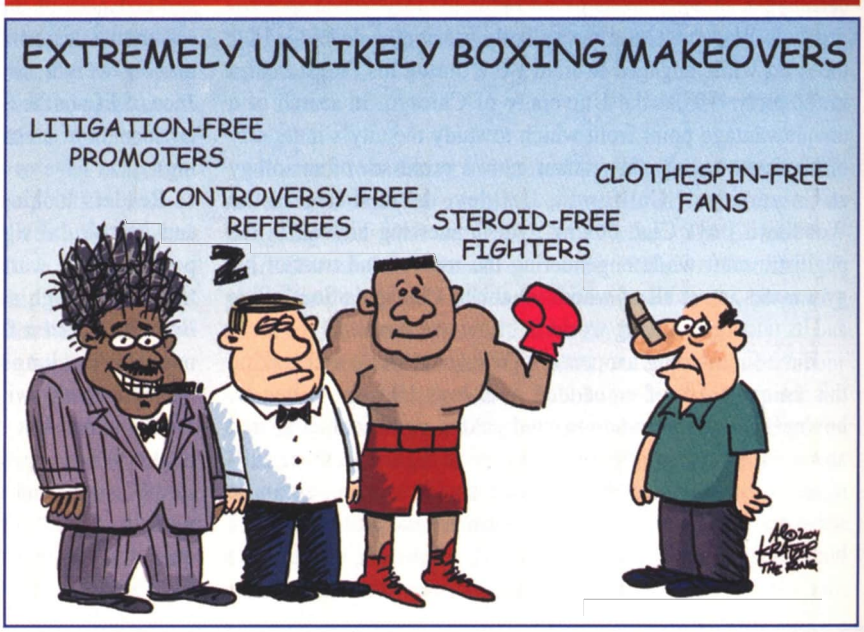
"Don King is a cancer in the sport of boxing. Today's settlement provided boxing with a dose of chemotherapy."

—Judd Burstein, Terry Norris' lawyer, after King agreed to pay Norris $7.5-million

"If I'm going to overdose, I'm going to go for it. I'm not hesitating, you know?"

—Johnny Tapia, denying rumors that his latest hospitalization was caused by a drug overdose

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

(For period ended January 14, 2004)

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **ROY JONES** Heavyweight/Light Heavyweight
2. **BERNARD HOPKINS** Middleweight
3. **SHANE MOSLEY** Junior Middleweight
4. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Junior Middleweight
5. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER** Lightweight
6. **MANNY PACQUIAO** Featherweight
7. **KOSTYA TSZYU** Junior Welterweight
8. **ERIK MORALES** Junior Lightweight
9. **JAMES TONEY** Heavyweight
10. **ANTONIO TARVER** Light Heavyweight

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Vitali Klitschko advances from fourth to first following his kayo of Kirk Johnson, which pushes down Chris Byrd (first last issue) to second. Klitschko's advancement also forces down Corrie Sanders (second last issue) and Roy Jones (third last issue) to third and fourth, respectively. John Ruiz replaces Hasim Rahman at seventh, who exits due to his loss to Ruiz.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: James Toney (first last issue) is now campaigning exclusively at heavyweight, which advances Vassiliy Jirov (second last issue) to number one. Wayne Braithwaite (fourth last issue) moves ahead of Jean-Marc Mormeck (third last issue) due to Braithwaite's kayo of Luis Pineda, and with Toney's departure, Braithwaite lands at two and Mormeck at three. Guillermo Jones (fifth last issue) is gone because he has not fought in more than 12 months. The removals of Toney and Jones make room for Dale Brown and Pietro Aurino to enter at numbers nine and 10, respectively.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Danny Green is newly aboard at number five after stopping Eric Lucas, who previously held that spot. Lucas exits. Also new is Robin Reid, who replaces Syd Vanderpool at number 10 due to a strong showing against Sven Ottke.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: William Joppy falls from first to fourth following his loss to champion Bernard Hopkins. Joppy's demotion allows Howard Eastman (second last issue), Robert Allen (third last issue), and Rodney Jones (fourth last issue) to climb one rung each.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Kassim Ouma jumps from sixth to fourth thanks to his kayo of J.C. Candelo, who slips from eighth to ninth. Ouma's progress pushes down Javier Castillejo (fourth last issue) and Daniel Santos (fifth last issue) one place each. Also, Travis Simms enters at number eight after stopping Alex Garcia (ninth last issue). Garcia departs.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Cory Spinks (third last issue) is the new world champion, while Ricardo Mayorga, whom Spinks upset to win the title, is now number one. The shake-up forces down Vernon Forrest (first last issue) and Antonio Margarito (second last issue) one spot each.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Ricky Hatton (seventh last issue) rises to fifth following his victory over Ben Tackie. This pushes down DeMarcus Corley (fifth last issue) and Oktay Urkal (sixth last issue) to sixth and seventh, respectively. Miguel Cotto (ninth last issue), fresh off an impressive win over Carlos Maussa, trades places with Omar Weis (eighth last issue).

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Acelino Freitas (first at 130 pounds last issue) crashes the lightweight rankings at number five by defeating Artur Grigorian, who falls from fifth to eighth. Alejandro Gonzalez (eighth last issue) departs due to inactivity. Also, Javier Jauregui (seventh last issue) and Courtney Burton (previously sixth) trade places on the heels of Jauregui's win over Leavander Johnson.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: With Freitas now fighting at lightweight, everybody ranked below him last issue moves up one spot, and Orlando Salido is aboard at number 10.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

FLYWEIGHTS: Lorenzo Parra (eighth last issue) rockets to number two after upsetting Eric Morel, who drops from first to fourth. Pongsaklek Wonjongkam moves from second to first, while all the fighters ranked between fourth and seventh last issue drop one spot each to accommodate Parra's rise.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Victor Burgos improves from ninth to third on the strength of his draw with world champion Rosendo Alvarez, forcing everyone in between down one spot.

STRAWWEIGHTS: Eagle Akakura enters at number two following his upset win over Jose Aguirre, who falls from first to fourth. Aguirre's tumble allows Noel Arambulet to advance from second to first. Joma Gamboa (seventh last issue) is removed after a loss to Jorge Arce at junior flyweight. Ivan Calderon (10th last issue) and Edgar Cardenas (ninth last issue) flip-flop due to Calderon's win over Alex Sanchez.

POUND-FOR-POUND: Ricardo Mayorga (ninth last issue) departs following his loss to Cory Spinks. James Toney (10th last issue) moves up to ninth, and Antonio Tarver debuts at number 10. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended January 14, 2004

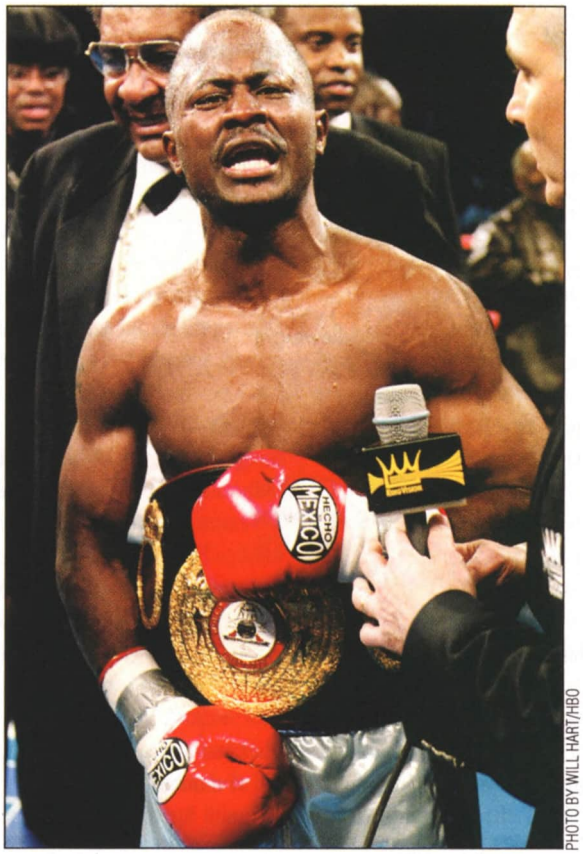


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Travis Simms crashed the junior middleweight rankings at number eight

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled in one of two ways: by unifying all three alphabet titles in a division; or by winning a box-off between THE RING'S number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: LENNOX LEWIS
England 41-2-1 (32)

1. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 33-2 (32)
2. **CHRIS BYRD**
Flint, MI 37-2 (20)
3. **CORRIE SANDERS**
South Africa 39-2 (29)
4. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 49-1 (38)
5. **JAMES TONEY**
Ann Arbor, MI 67-4-2 (43)
6. **DAVID TUA**
New Zealand 42-3-1 (37)
7. **JOHN RUIZ**
Methuen, MA 39-5-1 (27)
8. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 42-2 (39)
9. **FRES OQUENDO**
Puerto Rico 24-2 (15)
10. **MIKE TYSON**
Catskill, NY 50-4 (44)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: SHANE MOSLEY
Pomona, CA 39-2 (35)

1. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
Los Angeles, CA 36-3 (29)
2. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 46-3 (25)
3. **FERNANDO VARGAS**
Oxnard, CA 24-2 (22)
4. **KASSIM OUMA**
W. Palm Beach, FL 19-1-1 (13)
5. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 56-5 (38)
6. **DANIEL SANTOS**
Puerto Rico 27-2-1 (20)
7. **VERNO PHILLIPS**
Aurora, CO 36-9-1 (18)
8. **TRAVIS SIMMS**
Norwalk, CT 23-0 (18)
9. **J.C. CANDELO**
Colombia 27-6-3 (19)
10. **BRONCO McKART**
Monroe, MI 46-5 (30)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO
Philippines 38-2-1 (29)

1. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 42-2 (33)
2. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 57-4 (40)
3. **SCOTT HARRISON**
Scotland 20-2-1 (10)
4. **MANUEL MEDINA**
Mexico 62-14 (28)
5. **JOHNNY TAPIA**
Albuquerque, NM 53-3-2 (28)
6. **DERRICK GAINER**
Pensacola, FL 39-6-1 (24)
7. **INJIN CHI**
South Korea 27-2-1 (16)
8. **MICHAEL BRODIE**
England 35-1-1 (23)
9. **WILLIAM ABELYAN**
Glendale, CA 23-4-1 (12)
10. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 19-0 (14)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: PAULIE AYALA
Ft. Worth, TX 35-2 (12)

1. **OSCAR LARIOS**
Mexico 50-3-1 (35)
2. **MAHYAR MONSHIPOUR**
France 24-2-2 (15)
3. **JOSE LUIS VALBUENA**
Venezuela 23-2-1 (13)
4. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ**
Mexico 35-3 (26)
5. **SALIM MEDJKOUNE**
France 42-4-1 (21)
6. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 20-0 (16)
7. **OSAMU SATO**
Japan 27-2-3 (16)
8. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG**
Thailand 35-1-1 (19)
9. **NEDAL HUSSEIN**
Australia 31-1 (18)
10. **JORGE LACIERVA**
Mexico 23-5-4 (15)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 30-3 (27)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM**
Thailand 41-1-2 (29)
3. **TIM AUSTIN**
Cincinnati, OH 25-1-1 (22)
4. **CRUZ CARBAJAL**
Mexico 24-11-1 (20)
5. **JOHNNY BREDAHL**
Denmark 54-2 (26)
6. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
Japan 23-3-3 (14)
7. **PETE FRISSINA**
Tarpon Springs, FL 27-3-1 (15)
8. **GENARO GARCIA**
Mexico 30-4 (18)
9. **SILENCE MABUZA**
South Africa 15-0 (14)
10. **HERIBERTO RUIZ**
Mexico 28-2-2 (13)

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VASSILIY JIROV**
   Kazakhstan 33-1 (29)
2. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
   Guyana 20-0 (17)
3. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
   France 29-2 (21)
4. **JOHNNY NELSON**
   England 43-12-2 (28)
5. **O'NEIL BELL**
   Atlanta, GA 22-1-1 (21)
6. **EZRA SELLERS**
   Washington, D.C. 26-5 (24)
7. **SEBASTIAN ROTHMAN**
   South Africa 17-1-2 (12)
8. **VIRGIL HILL**
   Bismarck, ND 49-4 (23)
9. **DALE BROWN**
   Canada 30-3-1 (20)
10. **PIETRO AURINO**
    Italy 26-2 (11)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ROY JONES
Pensacola, FL 49-1 (38)

1. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL 21-2 (17)
2. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
   Huntington Beach, CA 35-1 (22)
3. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI**
   Germany 48-1 (38)
4. **GLENCOFFE JOHNSON**
   Miami, FL 39-9-2 (27)
5. **ERIC HARDING**
   Philadelphia, PA 21-3-1 (7)
6. **CLINTON WOODS**
   England 35-2-1 (21)
7. **SILVIO BRANCO**
   Italy 49-6-2 (30)
8. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
   Chicago, IL 44-4 (29)
9. **RICHARD HALL**
   Winter Haven, FL 27-4 (25)
10. **MEHDI SAHNOUNE**
    France 24-1 (21)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOE CALZAGHE**
   Wales 36-0 (29)
2. **SVEN OTTKE**
   Germany 33-0 (6)
3. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
   Australia 19-1 (14)
4. **ANTWUN ECHOLS**
   Davenport, IA 29-5-1 (26)
5. **DANNY GREEN**
   Australia 17-1 (17)
6. **BYRON MITCHELL**
   Ozark, AL 25-3-1 (18)
7. **MARKUS BEYER**
   Germany 28-1 (11)
8. **CHARLES BREWER**
   Philadelphia, PA 40-9 (28)
9. **MADS LARSEN**
   Denmark 45-2 (37)
10. **ROBIN REID**
    England 36-4-1 (27)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 43-2-1 (31)

1. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
   England 38-1 (35)
2. **ROBERT ALLEN**
   Atlanta, GA 36-4 (27)
3. **RODNEY JONES**
   Lafayette, LA 31-3 (20)
4. **WILLIAM JOPPY**
   Washington, D.C. 34-3-1 (25)
5. **SERGEY TATEVOSYAN**
   Russia 19-3 (13)
6. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
   Little Rock, AK 19-0 (14)
7. **EVANS OURE ASHIRA**
   Denmark 23-0 (13)
8. **FELIX STURM**
   Germany 20-0 (9)
9. **KINGSLEY IKEKE**
   Canada 18-1 (10)
10. **RAYMOND JOVAL**
    Netherlands 31-2 (14)

WELTERWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: CORY SPINKS
St. Louis, MO 32-2 (11)

1. **RICARDO MAYORGA**
   Nicaragua 25-4-1 (22)
2. **VERNON FORREST**
   Atlanta, GA 35-2 (26)
3. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
   Mexico 29-3 (20)
4. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
   Denmark 32-0 (25)
5. **MICHELE PICCIRILLO**
   Italy 40-2 (25)
6. **MANUEL GOMEZ**
   Mexico 25-10 (18)
7. **ANDREW LEWIS**
   Guyana 22-2-1 (20)
8. **TEDDY REID**
   Adelphi, MD 22-5-1 (16)
9. **JAWAID KHALIQ**
   England 22-1-1 (13)
10. **JOSE RIVERA**
    Worcester, MA 37-3-1 (24)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: KOSTYA TSZYU
Australia 30-1 (24)

1. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. 52-3 (30)
2. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY 30-1 (22)
3. **ARTURO GATTI**
   Jersey City, NJ 36-6 (28)
4. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
   Brooklyn, NY 23-1-1 (16)
5. **RICKY HATTON**
   England 34-0 (25)
6. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
   Washington, D.C. 28-2-1 (16)
7. **OKTAY URKAL**
   Germany 34-1 (10)
8. **MIGUEL COTTO**
   Puerto Rico 18-0 (15)
9. **OMAR WEIS**
   Los Angeles, CA 36-4-3 (16)
10. **JUNIOR WITTER**
    England 27-1-2 (16)

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 31-0 (21)

1. **JUAN LAZCANO**
   El Paso, TX 33-2-1 (25)
2. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
   Mexico 48-6-1 (44)
3. **LEONARD DORIN**
   Canada 21-0-1 (7)
4. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO 35-3-1 (17)
5. **ACELINO FREITAS**
   Brazil 35-0 (31)
6. **JAVIER JAUREGUI**
   Mexico 47-10-2 (34)
7. **COURTNEY BURTON**
   Benton Harbor, MI 20-1 (11)
8. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN**
   Uzbekistan 36-1 (22)
9. **JULIEN LORCY**
   France 56-3-2 (41)
10. **VICTORIANO SOSA**
    Dominican Republic 36-3-2 (26)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
   Miami, FL 30-1 (19)
2. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Mexico 40-2 (28)
3. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
   Bellflower, CA 40-3-1 (24)
4. **ERIK MORALES**
   Mexico 45-1 (34)
5. **DIEGO CORRALES**
   Sacramento, CA 37-2 (31)
6. **STEVE FORBES**
   Las Vegas, NV 23-2 (6)
7. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
   Thailand 39-2-1 (32)
8. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
   South Africa 28-1 (16)
9. **JORGE BARRIOS**
   Argentina 40-2-1 (29)
10. **ORLANDO SALIDO**
    Mexico 19-8-1 (12)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
   North Korea 30-2-1 (8)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
   Venezuela 25-0 (24)
3. **MARK JOHNSON**
   Washington, D.C. 42-3 (27)
4. **LUIS PEREZ**
   Nicaragua 22-1 (14)
5. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 26-1-1 (20)
6. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
   Mexico 24-1 (15)
7. **FELIX MACHADO**
   Venezuela 22-5-1 (11)
8. **MAURICIO PASTRANA**
   Colombia 30-4-1 (20)
9. **LUIS BOLANO**
   Colombia 38-0 (28)
10. **JOSE NAVARRO**
    Los Angeles, CA 19-0 (7)

FLYWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
   Thailand 50-2 (26)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
   Venezuela 22-0 (17)
3. **IRENE PACHECO**
   Colombia 28-0 (21)
4. **ERIC MOREL**
   Madison, WI 33-1 (18)
5. **MZUKISI SIKALI**
   South Africa 28-4-2 (17)
6. **MALCOLM TUNACAO**
   Philippines 14-1-2 (10)
7. **PETER CULSHAW**
   England 23-1-1 (12)
8. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
   Argentina 15-0-2 (9)
9. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
   Australia 20-0 (15)
10. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
    France 14-0 (6)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: ROSENDO ALVAREZ
Nicaragua 32-2-2 (21)

1. **JORGE ARCE**
   Mexico 35-3-1 (26)
2. **BEIBIS MENDOZA**
   Colombia 29-2 (23)
3. **VICTOR BURGOS**
   Mexico 36-13-3 (21)
4. **PICHIT SIRIWAT**
   Thailand 28-2 (13)
5. **NELSON DIEPPA**
   Puerto Rico 19-2-2 (11)
6. **MELCHOR COB-CASTRO**
   Mexico 66-9-4 (30)
7. **MHIKIZA MYEKENI**
   South Africa 17-1 (6)
8. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Colombia 35-2 (21)
9. **YOSAM CHOI**
   South Korea 25-3 (14)
10. **FAHLAN SAKKREERIN**
    Thailand 50-3-2 (20)

STRAWWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NOEL ARAMBULET**
   Venezuela 20-2-1 (10)
2. **EAGLE AKAKURA**
   Japan 12-0 (5)
3. **DANIEL REYES**
   Colombia 33-1-1 (28)
4. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico 30-2-1 (19)
5. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
   Japan 15-1-3 (8)
6. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand 50-2-2 (17)
7. **KEITARO HOSHINO**
   Japan 23-10 (6)
8. **ROBERTO LEYVA**
   Mexico 22-2-1 (19)
9. **IVAN CALDERON**
   Puerto Rico 18-0 (3)
10. **EDGAR CARDENAS**
    Mexico 30-11-2 (16)

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

REAL TO REEL

With *Rocky VI* ("Yo, Adrian, my prostate's enlarged!") set for release in 2004, we're reminded again that boxing and the movies go together like Johnny Tapia and a trip to the emergency room. From *Requiem For A Heavyweight* and *Fat City* to *Raging Bull* and *Ali*, the fight game has consistently provided compelling storylines, characters that stoke our emotions, and lots of blood-and-guts.

Instead of asking moviegoers to suspend reality while watching tired, old Rocky Balboa kick someone's ass yet again, however, why isn't Hollywood focusing on some of the more interesting subjects out there? You know, the *real* ones.

Sugar Ray Leonard, for instance, who went from eating a hamburger out of a garbage can to earning over $100-million. Aaron Pryor, whose fistic greatness couldn't prevent him from descending into a nightmare of drugs and self-abuse. Alexis Arguello, who had his fortune confiscated by Nicaragua's Sandinista government and returned to his homeland to fight with the contra rebels. George Foreman, who complexly reinvented himself not just as a fighter, but also as a person. Or Roberto Duran, who is such a complex soul that he'd be good for at least one sequel if not two.

While we await those epics, we'll apparently have to satisfy ourselves with the boxing films that are currently gracing the marquee. Look around. It's a veritable Tomato Cannes Film Festival. Now playing …

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Klitschko harpoons Johnson at the Garden

21 Grams: During the film's trailer, Sean Penn informs us that 21 grams is the weight of a stack of five nickels. Well, this gripping documentary gives us an insider's view of the rigorous training schedule of heavyweight Kirk Johnson as he tortures himself to lose 21 grams before his showdown with Vitali Klitschko.

Something's Gotta Give: In the most interesting look into a troubled mind since *Being John Malkovich*, director Sam Mendes attempts to answer the question: Does heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis grant Klitschko a rematch or retire?

The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Though audience members were laughing hysterically during a recent sneak pre-

view, this is *not* a comedy. Shot entirely on location in the Bristol, Connecticut, offices of ESPN, this 90-minute drama tells the story of ESPN's attempt to branch into hard news and the cable network's subsequent decision to avoid televising any banana republic revolutions unless that country's dictator or its rebel guerillas find a suitable sponsor.

Stuck On You: Highlights of the John Ruiz-Hasim Rahman bout, which featured more tight clinches than that Paris Hilton videotape.

Young Black Stallion: The Cory Spinks story.

Whale Riders: Kids will love this cartoon about a fly that climbed on the back of Johnson during his walk to the ring for the Klitschko bout.

Cheaper By The Dozen: Follow the daily maneuverings of Philadelphia promoter J Russell Peltz as he tries to come up with a way to sell more than 3,411 tickets the next time he holds a card at Philly's 17,000-seat Spectrum.

Cold Mountain: Here's an entertaining comedy about the time Mia St. John's farsighted trainer accidentally held the Enswell to her right breast instead of her right eye between rounds. (That's right, friends, no column like this would be complete without the requisite Mia St. John boobs joke.)

The Triplets Of Belleville: Fairly predictable yawner in which middleweight king Bernard Hopkins, still unwilling or unable to face anyone we care about, selects his next three opponents.

The Statement: Sound bites of all of the insightful and prescient observations made by Foreman during his HBO broadcasting career. Running time: 45 seconds. This movie received its controversial R rating for the disturbing images of Jim Lampley and Larry Merchant attempting suicide after several telecasts.

Shattered Glass: Rated R for gory images of plastic surgery, we watch as Joe Mesi's jaw is put back together after he faces his first world-class heavyweight foe.

The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King: Highlights of Kostya Tszyu's return to action.

Donnie Darko: The title refers to Don King and his mood after he learned that he'd have to pay $7.5-million to ex-champ Terry Norris to settle a lawsuit.

In America: The only place where King can still be king.

The Haunted Mansion: Not for small children or even faint-hearted adults, this nail-biter tells the story of the day Evander Holyfield returned to his Georgia home and discovered that every room of the house was occupied by a media member determined to talk him into retiring. My favorite scene: Max Kellerman, a pair of Jockey underwear on his head, jumping out of the clothes hamper in "The Real Deal's" master bedroom.

The Hebrew Hammer: Simple plot: Bob Arum, frustrated by the scoring of the Oscar De La Hoya-Shane Mosley rematch, wreaks havoc on the offices of the Nevada Athletic Commission. Warning: The scene of Arum attempting to strangle Dr. Flip Homansky with his own stethoscope is tough to take.

Millennium Mambo: Displaying some of the finest footwork seen on screen since Fred Astaire, Spinks unifies the welterweight title in Atlantic City.

Monster: A movie about what reluctant warrior and safety expert Roy Jones created when he won an alphabet version of the heavyweight crown and then opened his mouth about wanting to take on more of the big boys.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

I want a cigarette, and I want it now!

Dirty Pretty Things: Cameras follow a bevy of round card girls as they attempt to find a working showerhead in the decrepit Blue Horizon.

Paycheck: An inside look at the reason Ray Mercer, Oliver McCall, Henry Akinwande, and Jeremy Williams keep fighting.

Lost In Translation: This comedy received four Golden Globe nominations. And who wouldn't get a kick out of junior flyweight Fahlan Sakkreerin hanging up his gloves and trying out for a job as George W. Bush's press secretary?

House Of Sand And Fog: It's one chuckle after another as Prince Naseem Hamed (remember him?) attempts to find a living space that combines the feel of his native Yemen and his adopted homeland of Great Britain. Marco Antonio Barrera plays the uncooperative real estate agent who derails his dream.

The Fog Of War: A laugh riot, this comedy shows what happens when the always-nutty Mayorga smokes a pack of cigarettes *during* a fight.

The Human Stain: In this suspenseful independent film, winner of several awards at the Sundance Film Festival, Paul Spadafora wakes up one morning to discover that a bizarre chemical reaction has caused all of his tattoos to blend together.

The Cooler: A chronicling of the events surrounding the Fernando Vargas-Tony Marshall fight, which was held *outdoors* in 38-degree weather in Tucson, Arizona. My favorite scene is the one in which the judges, brought in from Antarctica, Siberia, and International Falls, Minnesota, are instructed to consult the scorecards in the event that a fighter loses a leg due to frostbite after four rounds are completed.

Call your theater of the absurd for show times. ■

DIGGING DEEP

By Ivan Goldman

STILL THE MAN

Although I took my time climbing aboard the Roy Jones bandwagon, I'm not jumping off after just one so-so outing against Antonio Tarver. First off, Tarver can protest all he wants, but the decision for Jones was correct. If you want to beat a guy, you don't just stand there and watch him, which is what Tarver did most of the fight.

The night Jones defeated John Ruiz, he weighed in unofficially at 199, still sporting a washboard stomach. Overconfident after years of lopsided success, Jones mistakenly believed he could take off 24 pounds of muscle and still be adequately prepared for Tarver.

Meanwhile, though his critics may not have noticed, Jones, who started out as a junior middle, has totally cleared out the light heavyweight division. There's nothing left in the cash register. He got it all.

Watching big, tough Hasim Rahman completely flustered by Ruiz brought back fond memories of watching Jones take clutch-master Ruiz apart. How many top fighters have been able to make clinch-mongering Ruiz fight a legitimate fight? Only two that I've seen, David Tua and Jones.

HOPKINS EXECUTES: Yes, Jones is something special—working outside. But middleweight champ Bernard Hopkins, while dismantling William Joppy, showed once again he's a master inside as well as outside. Can anyone explain to me how, at age 39, this guy manages to keep improving? Scary.

ARUM VS. OSCAR: The promotional battle heats up between Oscar De La Hoya and his own promoter, Bob Arum. Near the end of last year, De La Hoya's fast-rising Golden Boy Promotions put on a card at the Grand Olympic in Los Angeles while that same night Arum sponsored a card of his own just down the freeway at the Arrowhead Pond in Anaheim.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Goldman is still on Jones' bandwagon

What was the score? Golden Boy drew 5,440 fans to see junior feather titlist Oscar Larios stop Napapol Kiatisakchokchai in 10 rounds, while Arum's Top Rank put 3,216 fans in the seats to watch lightweight John Brown get counted out in the first round against Rolando Reyes on a questionable call by referee Jack Reese.

Arum, who hates losing, drew a few extra fans by announcing that local favorite Julio Gonzalez would be presented his WBO light heavyweight belt at the Pond show. The affable but hard-hitting Gonzalez won the title earlier with a surprise split decision victory over Dariusz Michalczewski on his home turf in Germany.

The two cards also faced off on TV. Arum's card was broadcast on local Channel 9. De La Hoya's show exemplified the sorry trend of extracting extra dol-

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Oscar and Arum: Going head-to-head at the box office

lars from loyal Hispanic fans by putting barely known Spanish-surnamed fighters on pay-per-view.

EUGENIA WILLIAMS AND THE NIGHT OF LIVING DREAD: What happens when Don King, the WBA, and the New Jersey Commission all get together? Nothing good. You end up with the vision-challenged Eugenia Williams scoring fights again. This time it was when junior middles Alejandro Garcia and Travis Simms faced off in Atlantic City.

In 1999, when Ms. Williams scored round five of Evander Holyfield's first bout with Lennox Lewis for Holyfield, she should have been escorted off the property immediately, before she could score any more rounds. But she wasn't, and she shocked much of the free world by calling it 115-113 for Holyfield. Promoted at the time by King, Holyfield got away with one of history's least-deserved draws.

This time, Ms. Williams' scoring became moot when King-promoted Simms clocked naive Garcia in round five as they broke from a clinch. Simms walked off with one of those alphabet titles that aren't really titles at all when you read the fine print, even though fighters still have to pay a sanctioning fee to get them.

By allowing Williams back on a judge's stool for a King-promoted card, the New Jersey commission placed itself in the same dumpster with the alphabet groups. But New Jersey isn't the only commission in there. Nevada, for example, keeps sneaking Dalby Shirley back into its lineup, and he's made more bad calls than Saddam Hussein.

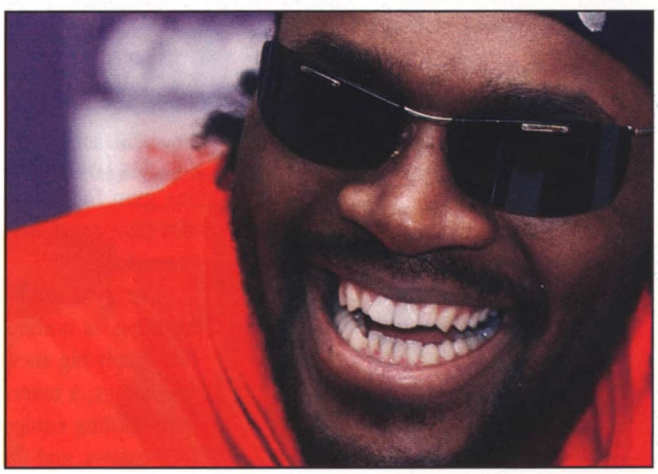
But Shirley, unlike Saddam, doesn't stay down in a hole. He goes out and officiates. Let me reiterate some of his asinine scores: Barrera-Morales I, 115-112 for Morales, even after Barrera scored a knockdown in the 12th; De La Hoya over Pernell Whitaker by *six* points; Sugar Ray Leonard-Tommy Hearns II a draw. Even Leonard admitted he lost. I've never seen Shirley called to account for these scores. He does his deed, presumably picks up his check, and goes underground until the next one. But why, oh why, Nevada commission, is there always a next one?

Whenever commissions feel compelled to assign such officials, they at least ought to make them wear special little beanies with propellers on top. That way everyone will know what to expect if the fight goes to the cards. Also, any unruly fans would be able to get their riot out of the way before the opening bell.

GOOD MATCH FOR AUDLEY: A while ago I was introduced to British heavyweight prospect Audley Harrison. Within 10 seconds, he asked if I thought he'd win the championship.

"It's too soon to tell," I told Harrison, a catchall answer that seemed to satisfy him. That wasn't completely forthright, but denigrating his talents under such circumstances would be like telling somebody his wife needs to lose weight.

You don't have to be the second coming of Eddie Futch to see that aging prospects like Harrison, 32, and Joe Mesi, 30, are mere apprentices compared to established predators like Corrie Sanders, Vitali Klitschko, James Toney, and Roy Jones, who are about the same age. If Harrison and Mesi want to prove otherwise, they should fight each other. That's how you sort out contenders from pretenders.



Hey, Audley! Why not fight Mesi?

NO HARD FEELINGS: As I spoke briefly with HBO's Jim Lampley recently, he mentioned an earlier column in which I'd referred to him as a multimillionaire broadcaster with a clothing allowance. But the good-natured Lampley took the characterization in stride. I even heard him joking about it with his footmen as he stepped out of his carriage.

FISTS OF LEAD: As I write this, junior feather Edwin Valero, 21, a Venezuelan transplant who trains in L.A. and is managed by Joel De La Hoya, Oscar's father, is 12-0 (12) with all 12 kayos coming in the first round. I've seen him. Watch out for this kid.

CLOSING STORY: Murad Muhammad, a protege of Jim Jacobs, told me a story Jacobs loved to tell about his associate, Cus D'Amato.

Many years ago, somebody asked D'Amato to look over a heavyweight prospect. The prospect squared off against an inexperienced sparring partner, and to show off, kept knocking him down. After watching this go on for a while, someone asked D'Amato what he thought about the hot prospect.

"Forget him," he said. "I want the guy who keeps getting up." Unfortunately for D'Amato, he never signed the gutsy sparring partner whose name was Joe Louis. ■

BEING THERE

L & M GYM

IF YOU GO

Location: The L & M Gym is located in the Sampaloc area of Manila on Pacquita Street and is open six days a week, closed on Sundays. For information, call the gym just after lunch at 735-1335 (from other countries, dial 011-63-2, then the number).

Directions: From Manila proper take the Quezon Bridge toward the Quiapo section. Follow Quezon Ave. about one mile past the bridge, and then turn right on Pacquita St. Pacquita St. is a tiny alleyway and is easy to miss, so make sure your driver knows the area or stops to ask. There's no sign over the front door telling you that you're at a gym, but everyone in the area knows where the place is located.

Membership: Approximately $5 a month, or free with a boxing license. This is mostly applied to Filipino fighters, however. Foreigners who want to experience the grim reality of training in a third world boxing gym are welcome free of charge.

Who to look out for: Pacquiao has been training at the L & M since the beginning of his career and still works out there when he's in Manila. When he's not training, he often hangs out inside the small air-conditioned office.

Advice to greenhorns: It is strongly recommended that you take a local with you, as the maze of tangled and narrowed streets makes the gym nearly impossible to find. A guide will also help to converse with the locals, who generally don't see foreigners in this part of town and will be so surprised to see you that they'll probably insist you come over for dinner and drinks. If you do crave a little urban adventure and want to go it alone, just remember to smile and keep repeating, "boxing gym, L & M gym." Before long, somebody will probably take you there personally.

Text And Photos by Ted Lerner

The L & M Gym is one of the oldest cliches in boxing: a gritty, grimy, hole-in-the-wall gym, which produces hard-nosed, unbreakable fighters. Located down a narrow alley in a teeming and seedy area of this over-crowded metropolis, the L & M has been Manila's top boxing gym for four decades, attracting both dirt-poor teens just starting out and world champions.

The gym itself, located in a crumbling building, is nothing more than a cramped box barely big enough for the two worn-out heavybags, a tattered ring, and dilapidated weightlifting equipment. There are no fans or windows, and the dirty, low ceiling traps the sultry tropical air inside, making it brutally hot and humid. Besides the stifling heat, the air is also thick with the smell of old sweat, and urine from the plugged up toilets in the back.

"The grittiness, the stench, it makes them tough," said co-owner Moi Lainez, referring to the 25 to 40 boxers who cram the tiny gym six days a week.

Sneakers and boxing boots await their owners

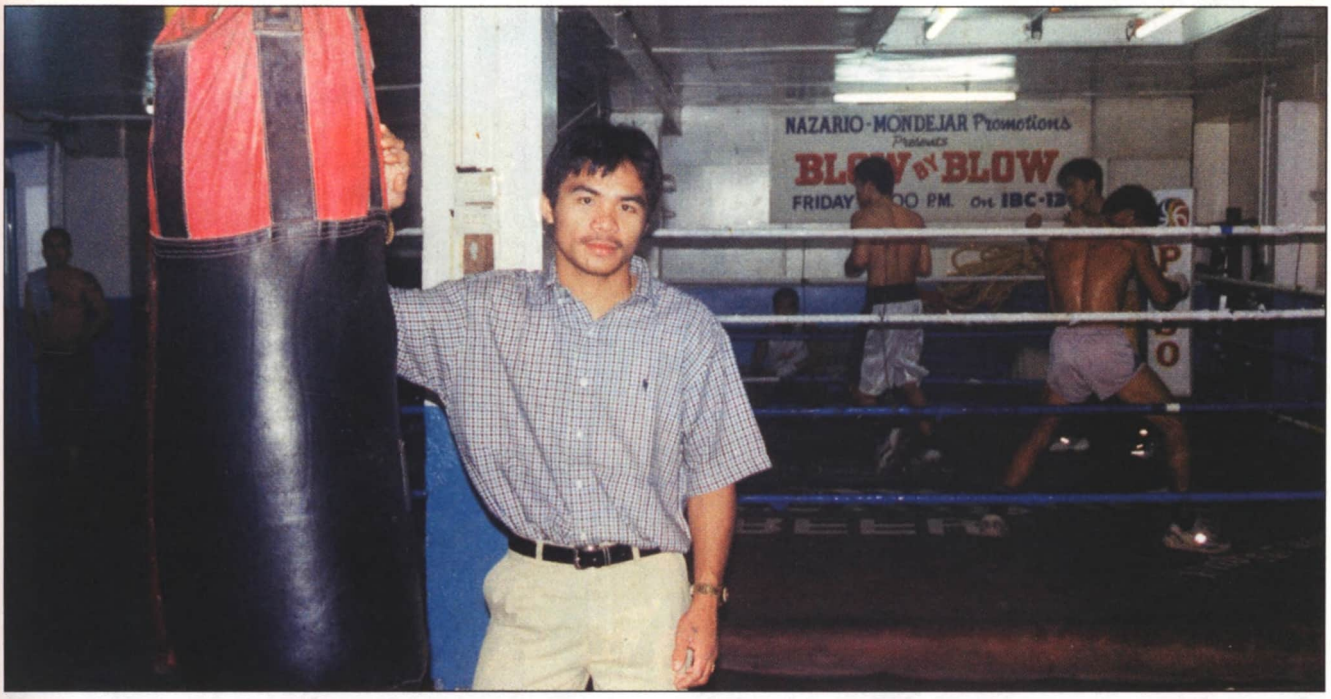
Gym owners Mondejar (left) and Lainez

Lainez, now 61, opened the L & M in 1963 with his partner Lito Modejar, 67. This was during the heyday of Philippine boxing, back when Flash Elorde was junior welterweight champion. The two had their own stable of 25 boxers and ran a regular TV promotion that attracted fighters to the gym, which is centrally located in the heart of old Manila. Since then, nicer and better-equipped gyms have opened, but the L & M retains an intangible quality that helps keep the gym alive.

"In their minds, the fighters think that if you train here, you'll get lucky," said Mondejar. "This is a lucky gym."

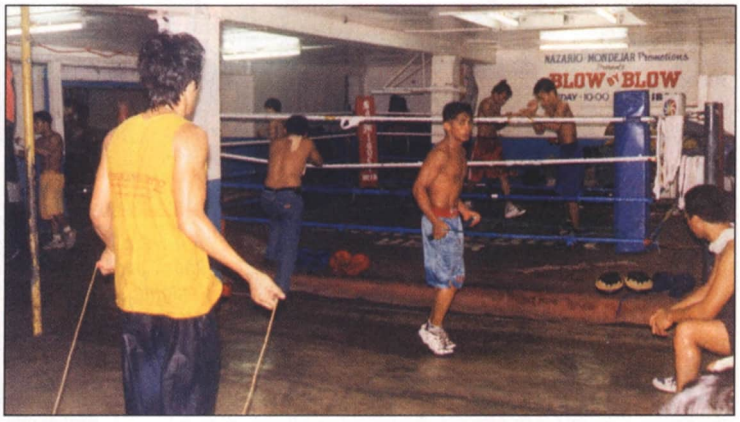
Indeed the L & M has produced more world champions, alphabet titleholders, and Orient and Philippine champions than any gym in the Philippines. They include WBC and WBA flyweight titlist Erbito Salavarria, WBC junior welterweight beltholder Pedro Adique, IBF junior fly titleholder Tacy Macalos, WBC featherweight and WBA junior feather titlist Luisito Espinosa, WBC super feather titleholder Rolando Navarette, and IBF light fly and WBA flyweight titlist Dodi Boy Penalosa. And, of course, current world featherweight champ Manny Pacquiao.

"I feel lucky here," explained Pacquiao,



Featherweight champ Pacquiao still trains at the L & M

The L & M Gym is in a rundown neighborhood



Filipino fighters consider the L & M a lucky gym

A couple of nasty-looking bunk beds occupy a corner

Unused equipment in the alley outside the gym

"and I like the atmosphere. It makes me strong. And I sweat."

These days, with the downturn in boxing, the L & M keeps just 11 boxers in its regular stable. But fortunately for those young Filipinos looking to get lucky in boxing, Lainez and Mondejar have no plans of closing the gym.

"We enjoy helping kids," said Lainez. "The ones that come here are all poor. I can't leave. It's already in the blood. I'll only get out when I can't walk anymore." ■

CAMERA CLICKS

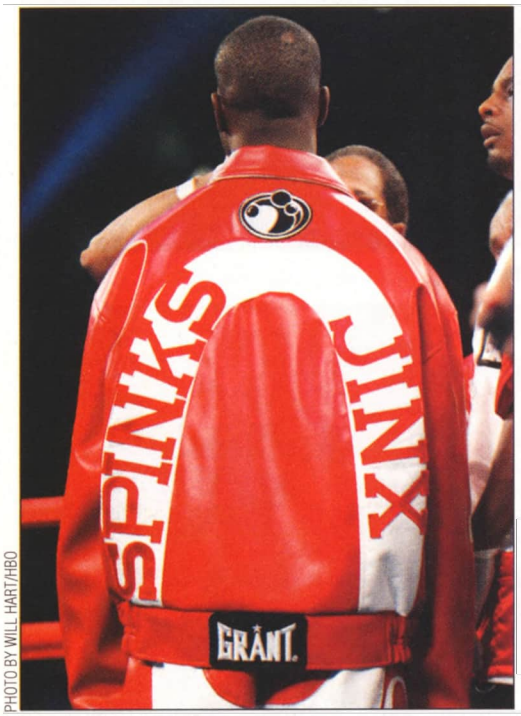


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Apparently, Cory Spinks wasn't worried about jinxing the jinx, as he proudly wore this "Spinks Jinx" jacket to the ring for his welterweight title challenge against Ricardo Mayorga. Now, if Mayorga can land a rematch, it's up to the beer-guzzling ex-champ to see if the "Drinks Jinx" can help him get revenge.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

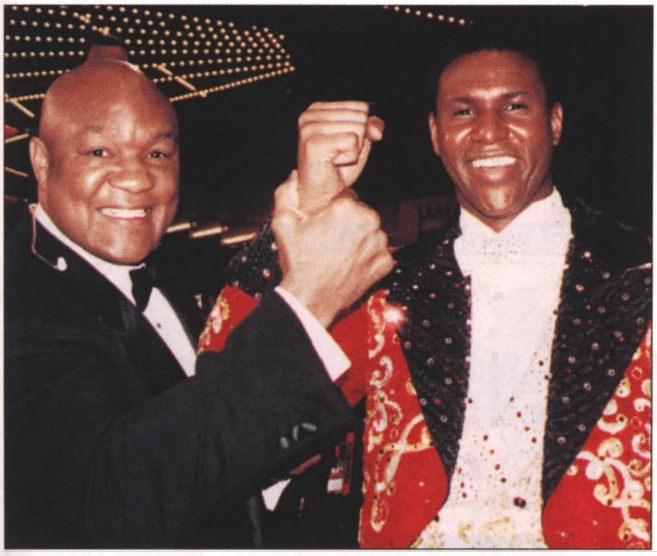
If it wasn't for the fact this is boxing and J.C. Candelo and Kassim Ouma were aiming to knock each other senseless, this would be one of the most adorable scenes you could imagine. As Ouma presented Candelo with the children's book Night Night Baby, *Candelo presented Ouma with a pillow reading "sweet dreams." No truth to the rumor that they later fell asleep in each other's arms and snuggled all night long.*

PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON

Never shy about doing a little spontaneous matchmaking, Don King appears to have Felix Trinidad's first comeback bout all lined up. The opponent may be a female with no boxing experience, but it could be worse—King could try to make a rematch with Hassine Cherifi.

PHOTO BY GREGG MARNANE

No, this isn't some never-before-seen photo of Acelino Freitas crowd-surfing at an early-'90s Pearl Jam concert—although that would seem more believable than to suggest he was this outrageously excited following his lackluster decision win over Artur Grigorian in January. We know we sure weren't.



Ringling Brothers ringmaster Johnathan Lee Iverson (a dead-ringer for Jermaine Jackson if you ask us) found out recently what the "Greatest Show On Earth" really is when he attended a fight card and met former heavyweight champ George Foreman. Or, taking the other point of view, perhaps Iverson found out the true meaning of the word "circus" by immersing himself in the world of boxing.

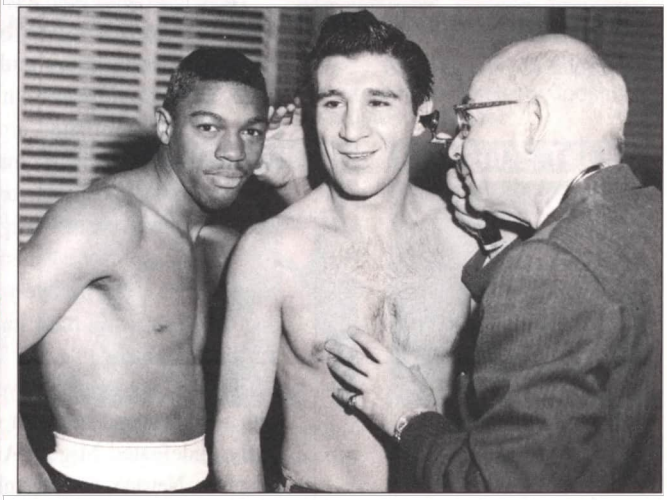
PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

And the next contestants in the three-legged race ... Rosendo Alvarez and Victor Burgos! After 12 hard rounds of combat ending in a draw, the two 108-pound warriors teamed up for one of the side attractions on Don King's December 13 Atlantic City show. Meanwhile, Hasim Rahman was warming up for the potato sack race, and Zab Judah and Michael Buffer were getting ready for the egg toss.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

It almost looks like an empty robe, doesn't it? Too bad for William Joppy it wasn't. Hidden under that mask was Bernard "The Executioner" Hopkins, who dished out such a sickening beating that Joppy probably could have used the mask for the next few weeks afterward.

NOSTALGIA CORNER



Operating under the assumption that there's nothing between opponent Willie Toweel's ears, Philadelphia lightweight Len Matthews figured he'd help Dr. Alex Schiff to do two ear exams at once prior to their November 1959 fight at Madison Square Garden. Unfortunately for Matthews, he didn't get to hear his name announced at the conclusion of the bout, as Toweel, despite suffering two knockdowns, captured the decision.

NEW FACES

CORNELIUS LOCK

Junior Featherweight

By Joe Santoliquito

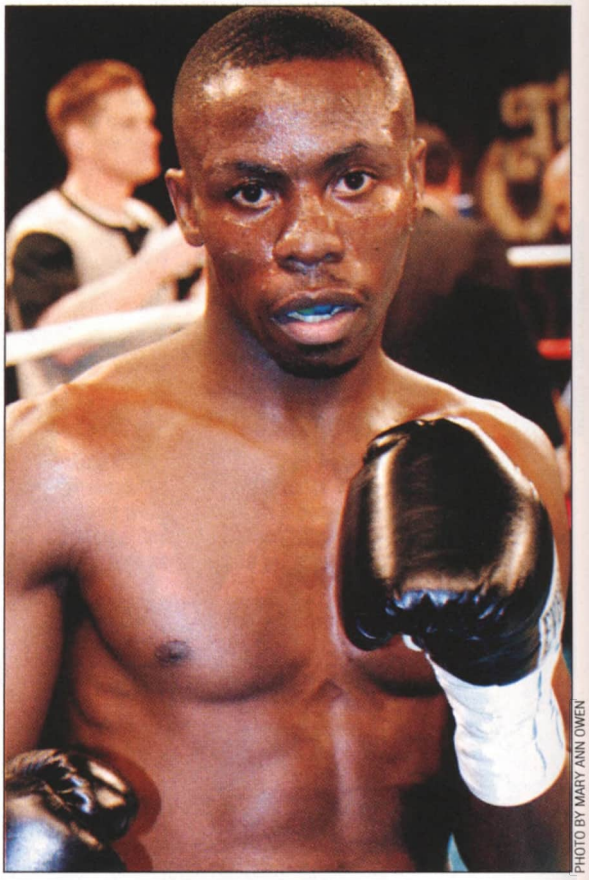


PHOTO BY MARY ANN OWEN

Cornelius Lock would take his time groping the floor each cold Detroit morning looking for his work boots, because he dreaded his reason for putting them on. Actually, it was beyond dread; it was utter contempt. Yet Lock did it.

Ten hours a day, six days a week, Lock lived a monotonous existence of working in an auto shop, putting tires on cars. His boxing dreams were as deflated as the tires he was replacing. Boxing had been a part of Lock's life ever since he was 11, but after fighting as a pro just once, he was stuck in a job he didn't like, thinking very strongly about never returning to the ring.

There must have been a trickle of desire still there, however, because despite the long hours and daily grind, Lock would work out at the gym. An accomplished amateur, Lock kept trying to contact managers and big-time promoters, anyone who would give him a chance to fight again.

One day, someone called back. Now, two years after he ended his two-year hiatus from the ring, Lock currently finds himself working his way toward a world title.

He took his biggest step yet toward that goal with a fourth-round knockout victory over previously undefeated Miguel Angel Munguia in Laughlin, Nevada, on December 12, 2003. The exciting fight received national exposure as part of an ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* show.

It also thrust Lock back into the role of potential contender. It's been a long, winding, and sometimes harsh road the 5'7" junior featherweight has taken to reach this point, since his pro debut on June 30, 2000. Lock's first and only loss came on that day against Mark McQueen, also debuting, in Southfield, Michigan.

During the first round, Lock fell when the fighters clashed heads, but the referee ruled it a knockdown and gave Lock an eight-count. Lock finished the round, and fought through the second round with a stream of blood flowing from a gaping cut above his right eye, caused by the accidental headbutt.

When the flow couldn't be stanched, the ringside doctor ended the fight after the third

(Continued on page 79)

PRO RECORD

2000		
June 30	Mark McQueen, Southfield, MI	KO by 3
2002		
Feb. 8	Roberto Michel, Rancho Mirage, CA	W 4
June 14	Luis Garcia, Las Vegas	W 4
July 26	Jorge Garcia, Las Vegas	W 4
Aug. 23	Simon Ramirez, Las Vegas	KO 2
Oct. 18	Heriberto Velazquez, Las Vegas	KO 1
Nov. 22	Enrique Colin, Las Vegas	KO 1
2003		
March 14	Link McClain, Warren, MI	KO 1
March 28	Pedro Mora, Las Vegas	KO 3
May 23	Alejandro Cruz Ramirez, Las Vegas	KO 3
June 27	John Nolasco, Las Vegas	D 8
Dec. 12	Miguel Angel Munguia, Laughlin, NV	KO 4

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
12	10	1	1	7

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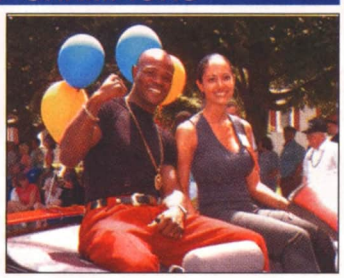

Hooray . . . Terry Norris strikes a fight pose for the fans.

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COCKTAIL PARTY

Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

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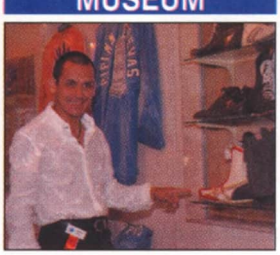
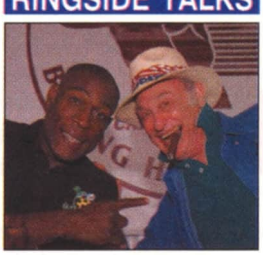


Ricardo Lopez points to his boxing shoes on display.

WORKOUT SESSIONS

Christy Martin laces up her gloves and Bernard Hopkins hits the speed bag.

RINGSIDE TALKS



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SUGAR SHANE VS. WINKY

Will Doing The WRIGHT Thing Turn Out Wrong For MOSLEY?

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

By David Mayo

Less than two years ago, Ronald "Winky" Wright was singing a different tune than he is now, and not just because Bronco McKart hit him with enough low blows to elevate his tone a couple of octaves. Boxing—the business, not the sport—cumulatively appeared to be doing what no opponent in the squared circle could. It was both knocking down and breaking down Wright, and ultimately had him positioned for a *coup de grace*.

But time and circumstances conspired in his favor. Just as he did when he rose five times from knockdowns during his first career loss nearly a full decade ago, Wright pulled himself up and fought forward. But his pursuit of the biggest names in the junior middleweight division had taken an emotional and spiritual toll. A missed chance against Fernando Vargas in a disputed 1999 decision loss had not produced the career advancement he hoped. He claims he actually tried to rein in his talent, make himself look beatable, in an effort to lure the big-money foes. Still, Oscar De La Hoya wouldn't bite. Vargas spurned a rematch. And taking a pass on Shane Mosley in 2002 appeared to be a long-term death-blow.

As Wright passed over to the untrustworthy side of age 30, with career opportunities slipping away, he considered slipping away himself. Another fight or two, a couple of quick money grabs in defense of the IBF 154-pound strap, and off he would go. Boxing had grown boring, he said. Unchallenging. He quit watching fights on television. He saw his future. It was not inside the ring.

"It was crazy. I knew I deserved the big fight. I did everything I could to get the big fight, but the fights eluded me," Wright said. "I did more than anyone who got the fights ever did to deserve them, but I couldn't get them. De La Hoya, Vargas, Mosley; they all just wanted to keep it in their little triangle. But you can only dodge so long."

Just before the new year began, Mosley stopped dodging, and agreed to fight Wright.

"I give Mosley credit for taking the fight that De La Hoya wouldn't take," Wright said. "This is like a new lease. It's what I've been waiting for, one moment to shine, a date for greatness."

Mosley also wanted a distinctive opponent. His victory last September over De La Hoya was not widely accepted by the boxing public, but the three judges came up with identical 115-113 scores, and they had the best views. And when an opportunity at a megabucks third fight presented itself, De La Hoya opted for an extended vacation instead.

With a third De La Hoya fight gone, at least for the time being, Ricardo Mayorga became Mosley's target. But then Cory Spinks exposed Mayorga in a dull affair, lifting the welterweight title that Mayorga had won and defended in two fights with Vernon Forrest, the only man ever to defeat Mosley. The Mosley-Mayorga pay-per-view attraction vanished, and Mosley had to take his world championship, as well as the WBC and WBA belts, in pursuit of a third option.

"I didn't want just any fight," Mosley said. "I wanted something meaningful. I wanted a fight that would please the fans. Mayorga could have been the guy, but when that didn't work out, a chance to become the first undisputed junior middleweight champion became the best choice."

On March 13 at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas, Wright finally gets the big-money opponent he has sought since the Vargas loss more than four years ago. And Mosley gets the meaningful opponent he sought after his first two options did not reach fruition, a consolation prize that will unify the principal alphabet belts for the first time in division history, although Mosley already owns distinction as THE RING's champion.

Both men will enter the ring at similar stages in their careers, both 32 years old, with glistening win-loss records. Mosley's 39-2 (35) log includes a far better knockout ratio than Wright's 46-3 (25) mark, although most of Mosley's record was built at lightweight, whereas Wright has been a junior middleweight throughout his career.

"The truth is, he's never fought a legitimate junior middleweight who was in his prime," Wright claimed.

Mosley, in fact, has fought just twice in the division over which he currently reigns—an aborted no-contest against Raul Marquez when a

Mosley pops Oscar De La Hoya with a left in their rematch. Sugar Shane would have preferred a third match with "The Golden Boy," but when that didn't materialize, he switched to Ricardo Mayorga, which was also scuttled when Cory Spinks beat Mayorga. All of this led to Wright's big break.

third-round head clash slashed Marquez, and the De La Hoya rematch. And those clinging to the De La Hoya dispute quickly point out that here we are, in 2004, and Mosley hasn't legitimately won a fight at any weight since beating Adrian Stone in 2001. He followed that with a pair of losses to Forrest in '02, then the two junior middleweight fights in '03.

"I'm not going to deal with all the negative stuff," Mosley said. "I won the De La Hoya fight because I did more. I made the fight. Three judges all scored it the same way, and most of the media thought I won the fight. The TV announcers might have had some effect on the way people saw it at home, but they didn't have any effect on the judges."

Still, the disputed outcome did affect any possibility of negotiating for a third De La Hoya fight, according to promotional officials associated with the deposed titleholder.

"Oscar's feeling is that there's nothing to gain in a third fight with Mosley, especially if he couldn't get the decision in the second fight," said Todd duBoef, Top Rank executive vice president.

Enter Wright, who has questions of his own to address. He has come up just short in some of his biggest career opportunities, losing his first title shot to then-WBA titleholder Julio Cesar Vasquez 10 years ago on a decision that was surprisingly close considering Vasquez floored Wright five times. He lost again in '99 to Vargas. His title victories have come against good opposition, but there isn't a hang-your-hat-on-that-one victory anywhere on his ledger. And he looked mediocre in his most recent win, a 12-round decision over rugged-but-unspectacular Angel Hernandez on November's Roy Jones-Antonio Tarver card.

There also is significant doubt whether Wright, even though he is the long-term 154-pounder in the upcoming bout, is a bigger puncher than Mosley. Wright's last eight fights all have been scheduled 12-rounders, and he has fought all or part of 85 of those 96 scheduled rounds—and it would have been more, if not for McKart's excessive low blows producing an eighth-round disqualification.

"People are going to say I can't knock Mosley out," Wright acknowledged. "I'm not a devastating one-punch knockout guy, never have been, never will be. But I hit hard enough that guys who fight me don't want to fight me again."

The notable exception is McKart, who lost three times to Wright from 1996-'02, and has been Wright's career-defining opponent up until now.

"In my opinion, if Wright fights like he fought Angel Hernandez and J.C. Candelo—if he stands there, catches, and counters—that won't work against Mosley," said McKart. "I think Mosley is too fast, and he looks strong at 154. Wright has to fight Mosley. But having said that, Winky deserves this shot. He's paid his dues. He's the most deserving junior middleweight in the world right now. I'm not one of those who think Shane Mosley just walks in there and beats Winky. Winky Wright has more than just a chance. I think he has a real good, solid opportunity at beating Mosley."

The fight that might have offered some parallel to Mosley-Wright was Mosley-Marquez, if only it had gone longer. Marquez, like Wright, is a lefthander, a fact Wright hopes to use to his advantage against Mosley. But Wright acknowledges he didn't get enough of a read from Mosley-Marquez to determine how Mosley reacts against lefties.

When training De La Hoya for last year's Mosley rematch, Floyd Mayweather Sr. studied Mosley-Marquez for a different reason—to see how Mosley would react to carrying seven additional pounds. Mayweather agreed it is difficult to take much from that fight, but still didn't think much of the one-act play that constituted Mosley's first fight at the junior middleweight limit.

"When he fought Marquez, the fight didn't last long, but to me, Shane was sort of hesitant," Mayweather said. "They didn't get far enough into the fight to tell how it was going to go, but Shane didn't do much. And Winky Wright is better than Marquez.

"But you look at the last fight, when Winky Wright fought a clubfighter [Hernandez], and the clubfighter gave him hell, and it doesn't give you a lot of confidence in Winky. Winky didn't look like a champion at all. The clubfighter was hitting him with everything. I don't think all that much of Shane at 154, but I think he beats Winky. I feel like Shane is going to be physically too strong for Winky. Even though Shane didn't hit De La Hoya with a lot of big punches, when he did hit him, he buckled De La Hoya. But I question Shane against a good lefthander. If Shane hesi-

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Wright connects with a left hook in his most recent outing, a 12-round decision over Angel Hernandez, who gave him more trouble than expected. Wright claims he was uninspired for the match and that fans will see him at his best against Mosley.

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tates against Winky like he did against Marquez, Winky needs to press him, because Shane doesn't fight well going backward."

Wright received stern reviews for his performance against Hernandez, which he attributed to a lackluster training approach and overlooking the opponent. It may seem like a lame explanation, but one Mosley said he understands and accepts nonetheless.

"Guys get up for different guys in different ways," Mosley said. "Winky Wright probably wasn't as motivated for Hernandez as he will be for me. I have to expect to get the best of Winky Wright because he knows this is the biggest opportunity of his career."

Wright also claims to have consciously deviated from his natural style in recent years, concerned that his image as a slick-boxing lefty was scaring away potential opponents. He said he has chosen to stand his ground more in recent fights, and sometimes do just enough to win, out of concern with what opportunities he might sacrifice by looking too good—an explanation fully deserving of the wink-and-nod reaction inevitably greeting it.

Wright's long pursuit of a big-name opponent left him embittered. He criticizes the three marquee-level junior middleweights for freezing him out in the aftermath of his 1999 loss to Vargas, in particular De La Hoya, who never seriously entertained a fight with Wright. Wright called De La Hoya "stupid" for refusing to fight him, "because if he really thought he could beat me, he should have fought me instead of Mosley, and unified the titles, instead of losing his titles to Mosley."

Wright also chastised Mosley for pursuing Mayorga before settling on the unification bout. But HBO Sports Vice President of Programming Kery Davis came to Mosley's defense in that regard, noting that it was Wright, not Mosley, who refused earlier attempts to make the Mosley-Wright match.

"It's a story that's been told before, but it's worth remembering that Shane wanted to fight Winky in January 2002, when he ended up fighting Vernon Forrest the first time instead," Davis said. "Winky turned the fight down because they couldn't reach an agreement on the money. But the fight has always been attractive to Shane, and it

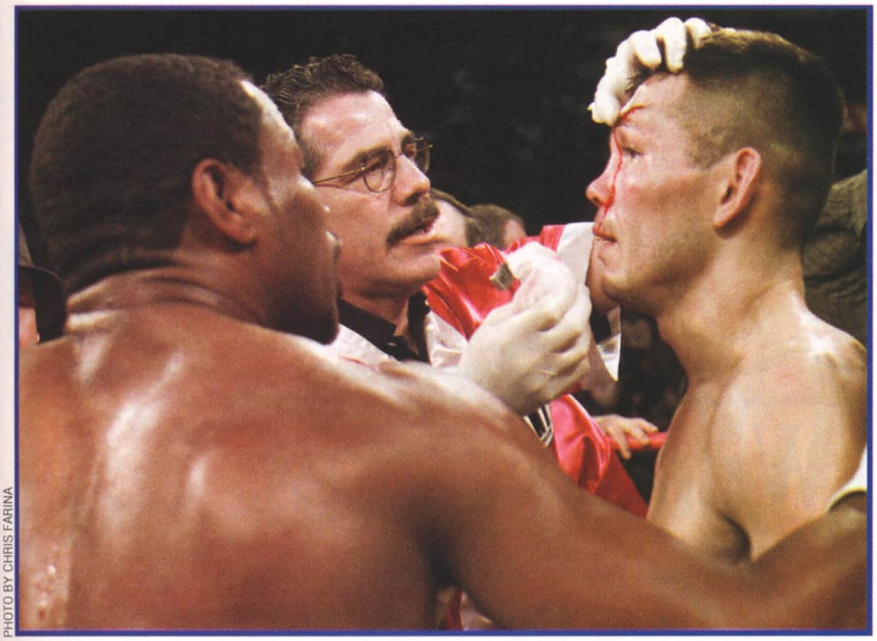

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Mosley consoles Raul Marquez after their February 2003 bout that ended in a third-round no-contest due to the cut Marquez suffered in an accidental clash of heads. Other than the De La Hoya rematch, it was Mosley's only outing in the junior middleweight division prior to meeting Wright.

proves Shane doesn't duck anybody, because no one is rushing out trying to get a fight with Winky Wright."

If Wright should pull off a major upset, plenty of rivals will be rushing to fight him. Wright said he understands Mosley's objectives in pursuing De La Hoya, and credits Mosley for accepting the unification fight. But most of all, he looks forward to ending two years of doubt over whether a marquee fight ever would circulate around to him.

"All the bad luck for Mosley was good luck for me," Wright said.

Maybe, but for Mosley the stakes are even higher. Wright was his third choice of opponent, and resulted in the bout being downgraded from pay-per-view to regular HBO. If he loses to Wright, we might never see Sugar Shane on PPV again. ■

David Mayo covers boxing for the Grand Rapid (Michigan) Press and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN

Wright wings a left at Bronco McKart en route to an eighth-round DQ win in the third of their three bouts against one another. McKart, probably the best fighter Wright has defeated, thinks his old nemesis has a good chance of beating Mosley for the undisputed title.

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THE NIGHT Of The UNDISPUTED

The *Real* Winners & Losers

By Eric Raskin

PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

Eight "title" fights. Ten beltholders of some variety, plus three more former wearers of belts. A mind-boggling 96 scheduled rounds of action (actually, 100 rounds if you count a four-round swing bout that didn't come off). An announce team not of three or four, but rather of eight.

At the very least, Don King's December 13 show at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City was high on quantity. As for quality, well … did we mention it was high on quantity?

In all seriousness, the quality was neither a knockout nor a strikeout. There were three sensational kayos, three closely contested distance fights, and two one-sided 12-round beatdowns—a little something for everybody. There was a result that severely changed the face of the welterweight division, and one that severely changed the face of one middleweight fighter. There were controversial finishes, fights in the stands, and legendary ex-champs all over the building. There were American soldiers acting as ring announcers, and there was even a murder on the boardwalk after the final fight ended.

Along the way, as with every other night at the fights, there were winners and losers. Obviously, every fighter who added a "W" to his record was a winner on a certain level, and every pugilist who came away with an "L" was a loser. But sometimes there were further implications, indirect winners and losers, people whose lives and careers may have been affected in manners that were less immediately apparent. There was, of course, Don King, whose promotion drew a sellout crowd of 12,346 and approximately 175,000-200,000 buys on HBO Pay-Per-View, enough to ensure that everybody involved made money. Considering that King paid ex-fighter Terry Norris $7.5-million to settle a court case just three days before the fight card, in a relative sense, any sort of profit on December 13 made King a winner. But "The Night Of The Undisputed: Back To Back To Back" still had to feel at times like a back-to-back-to-back-breaker for the gravitationally-defiant-haired promoter, as you'll see in our fight-by-fight analysis.

But King is just one of the many players we'll assess as we look back and analyze the biggest winners and losers from this unique and memorable evening of boxing—not to mention project forward and explore how December 13, 2003, will affect the fight game into 2004 and beyond.

ROSENDO ALVAREZ vs. VICTOR BURGOS

Setting The Stage: The first of three *real* world title fights on the marathon show, this was both the first defense of THE RING junior flyweight championship for Alvarez and a unification of two of the division's alphabet belts. Burgos, a journeyman on a surprisingly good run, was a clear-cut, yet live, underdog against the relatively inactive 33-year-old champ.

What Happened: The underdog turned out to be even more live than expected, and the champ's age and inactivity showed slightly in a close bout that would go down as the best of the evening. Burgos, 108, Puebla, Mexico, had the edge in hand speed and activity, while Alvarez, 108, Managua, Nicaragua, landed the heavier blows. The rounds were rarely easy to score; the judges were in unanimous agreement on only four of them, giving Alvarez the third and 12th, and Burgos the first and ninth. Alvarez seemed to shake the 29-year-old Mexican with a series of shots along the ropes in the sixth, but even as his left cheekbone began to swell badly, Burgos came back to sweep rounds seven through nine on THE RING's scorecard.

The action intensified in an excellent 10th round that saw Alvarez land most of the best punches, but then get backed up by a left to the jaw. Yet "El Bufalo" kept charging hard in the 11th and the punishing 12th to eke out a 115-114 victory on THE RING's card. And while Philippe Verbeke (Belgium) also made Alvarez the winner, at 116-112, Al Bennett (USA) had

Burgos blasts Alvarez with a right hand during their closely contested 12-round battle that opened the show. Burgos earned serious credibility by fighting to a draw with the favored Nicaraguan.

it 116-113 for Burgos, and Al DeVito scored it 114-114, making the result a perfectly justifiable split draw.

Grade: B+

The Big Winner: Burgos. Though he didn't win the world title, Burgos, 35-13-3 (20), retained his alphabet belt and gained major credibility from hardcore fans for going even-up with the established Alvarez, 32-2-2 (20). When your RING rating rises from nine to three in a single evening, you can safely call yourself a winner. And Burgos surely felt like a winner. "[Alvarez] probably got the draw because of his name," the disgruntled Mexican commented afterward.

The Big Loser: The fans. The reasoning here is two-fold: First, the folks at home who ordered the pay-per-view missed the best fight of the night (though they would have an opportunity to watch it two weeks later on Fox SportsNet); and second, hundreds of fans who paid good money for seats were unpardonably left out in the cold for the first two-plus rounds, until the doors were finally opened to the public. It was outrageous for the fighters to contest part of a world championship fight in front of nobody but the press and the ushers, and it was even more outrageous for the loyal fans who arrived at Boardwalk Hall by 5:00 p.m. and got royally screwed.

Other Winners & Losers: By retaining his world title, Alvarez has to be considered a slight winner, even though his performance was mildly disappointing ... Beibis Mendoza came away a loser, as his two close defeats to Alvarez don't look as impressive anymore ... King scored a minor victory, as a draw always leaves the door open for an appealing rematch.

WAYNE BRAITHWAITE vs. LUIS PINEDA

Setting The Stage: The cruiserweight division isn't boxing's best, but it does have its share of exciting fighters near the top, including bomber Braithwaite. This marking-time defense of his alphabet belt had all the makings of an explosive blowout, as Pineda had never fought a world-class opponent and had been starched in all three of his previous losses.

What Happened: This one went according to the script, except it was perhaps a little quicker, and a little more fun, than we expected. There was no feeling-out process at all, and about a minute into the opening round, Pineda, 199, Darien, Panama, connected with a series of bombs as he trapped Braithwaite, 189, Brooklyn, New York, via Guyana, along the ropes. But "Big Truck" came back and rattled Pineda, 29, with a right to the head, then landed a left hook to the body and one to the head, and finally connected with a huge right hand over the top as the challenger loaded up with a right of his own. Pineda dropped hard on his back, his left foot draped over the bottom rope, but somehow staggered up at referee Eddie Cotton's count of 9½—only to wobble backward drunkenly, prompting Cotton to halt the fight after just 87 entertaining seconds.

Grade: B

Braithwaite and Don King celebrate the cruiserweight titlist's sensational knockout victory over Pineda. A tougher fight with O'Neil Bell now awaits "Big Truck."

The Big Winner: Braithwaite. It's an obvious selection, but the only one that makes sense. The 28-year-old moved to 20-0 (17) with the sensational kayo, passed less active Jean-Marc Mormeck in THE RING ratings, and even scored comedy points by joking afterward that "it took a little bit longer than I thought." The only drawback for Braithwaite was that he scored his win before the PPV telecast began.

The Big Loser: Pineda. Again, we're playing the obvious card here, but Pineda, 17-4 (15), who'll probably never get another shot like this, was wiped out. We all appreciate that he came to fight, but with a chin like his, you have to play it a little bit safer if you want to win.

Other Winners & Losers: O'Neil Bell, who would win a fight of his own a week later against Derrick Harmon, was a winner on December 13 because he and Braithwaite stayed on track for an appealing showdown in '04 ... The WBC qualifies as a loser, as the number-five ranking it handed to Pineda was exposed as a joke. If it wasn't for the fact that nobody cares about what Jose Sulaiman has to say anymore, he would have a lot of explaining to do.

LUIS PEREZ vs. FELIX MACHADO

Setting The Stage: On January 4, 2003, in one of the best slugfests of the year, unknown Perez upset Machado for the IBF junior bantamweight title via split decision. Hardcore fans were hopeful that, in the rematch, the two gutsy 115-pounders would duplicate the drama of their first showdown and bookend '03 with Fight of the Year candidates.

What Happened: The southpaw-on-southpaw action was again reasonably fierce, but this time it was almost all one-way, as the 31-year-old Machado just couldn't keep the 25-year-old titlist off of him. Perez' rocket-launcher jab was wicked throughout, and he hurt Machado, 115, Bolivar, Venezuela, with a straight left in the fourth, a right hook in the fifth, and a torrent of shots late in the seventh.

The eighth round was perhaps the best of the whole evening of boxing. The aggressive Perez, 114, Managua, Nicaragua, hurt Machado badly with a left, a right, another right, and another left, nearly taking the challenger off his feet. But Machado dug in and fought back, showing tremendous heart as he unloaded his best shots. Perez, however, kept coming and clearly won the round, and at round's end, it looked like only a matter of time until a stoppage would be called. But, perhaps punched out, Perez eased up over the final four rounds, spoiling what had been a first-rate performance for the first two-thirds of the bout. Kason Cheeks (USA) scored it 119-109, Debra Barnes (USA) had it 117-111, and Lawrence Layton (USA) saw it 115-113, all for Perez, 22-1 (14). THE RING had it 118-111.

Grade: B-

The Big Winner: The Nicaraguan fans. On probably the most significant night for Nicaraguan boxing since Alexis Arguello faded from the scene, they came away with a draw in the Alvarez-Burgos fight and a loss in the Spinks-Mayorga bout (much more on that later). Had Perez failed to prevail, this night would have been a disaster for the people of the Central American nation, many of whom were in attendance and fervently waving their blue-and-white flags. But thanks to the Perez-Machado fight, the Nicaraguans were able to go home at least a little bit happy.

The Big Loser: Machado. The Venezuelan veteran took a serious beating, and went home with a badly swollen left eye and another loss on his 22-5-1 (12) record. After an all-too-inactive 2½-year title reign, Machado's time amongst the division's elite is now probably over.

Other Winners & Losers: Despite the lack of a stretch drive, Perez was clearly a winner, having proven his first win over Machado was no fluke ... Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson could benefit from Perez' triumph, as a showdown between the two 115-pound beltholders would be a natural in Washington, D.C. (Johnson's hometown, and the site of the first Perez-Machado thriller) ... Judge Layton, infamous for making Shannon Briggs a four-point winner over George Foreman, was a doubly infamous loser after handing in a scorecard that completely misrepresented what happened in this one-sided fight.

Perez' right jab scorched Machado, paving the way for a wide decision win for "El Demoledor." Since losing narrowly to Perez in their first bout 11 months earlier, Machado appears to have slipped and may now be finished as a real contender.

ZAB JUDAH vs. JAIME RANGEL

Setting The Stage: Coming off his lackluster win over DeMarcus Corley, and having gone 2½ years since his last knockout victory, Judah needed to do something sensational. "Super" Judah promised fans that, as the opener to the pay-per-view telecast, he would "steal the show," and in the painfully mediocre Rangel, he seemed to have found the perfect foil.

What Happened: Rangel, 140, Cordoba, Colombia, never had a chance. The ultra-quick Judah, 140, Brooklyn, New York, flashed a few speedy southpaw jabs, and just a minute into the fight, he flashed one that came up short but blinded Rangel to the left hand behind it. Judah's straight left landed flush on Rangel's jaw, and down he went. While Judah, ever the sportsman, jumped onto the turnbuckles and started celebrating at the count of four, Rangel remained almost motionless on the canvas, where referee Frank Cappuccino counted him out at the 1:12 mark.

Grade: B-

The Big Winner: Judah. Meaningless as this fight was, many fans have selective memories, and they'll remember the spectacular one-punch kayo rather than whom it came against. Judah, 30-1 (22) with 1 no-contest, had been developing a reputation as a waste of talent, but now people are again talking about his talent in positive terms.

The Big Loser: The WBO. As embarrassing as Luis Pineda was to the WBC, Rangel was even worse. He didn't land a noteworthy punch, was kayoed by the first clean shot to his chin, and yet was somehow the WBO's number-eight contender in boxing's deepest division. He had no business being in the top 40, yet the 'BO had the nerve to BS this guy into the top 10. Given the WBO's track record, look for Rangel to rise even higher when the next ratings come out.

Other Winners & Losers: Needless to say, Rangel, 29-5-1 (25), comes away a loser. When fighters in his position at least

Against the made-to-order Rangel, Judah looked like everything Max Kellerman ever said he'd be and more. Even if the knockout win didn't mean much, it was just what Judah needed.

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lose competitively, they often earn another chance on American TV; something tells us American fight fans won't be broken hearted if they never see Rangel again ... Anytime Judah looks good, Kostya Tszyu, his lone conqueror, also looks good. And Tszyu's a double-winner in that, should he get past Sharmba Mitchell, the hot-again Judah is an attractive next challenger ... Bobby Goodman is a winner because it was his job as DKP matchmaker to make Judah look like a world-beater, and he did his job well.

TRAVIS SIMMS vs. ALEX GARCIA

Setting The Stage: In some respects, it was the most intriguing bout of the evening, a journey into the unknown with two virtually anonymous junior middleweights sporting identical 22-0 records. Neither fighter had any significant TV exposure, but the 24-year-old Garcia had a buzz around him anyway thanks to his awesome 95 percent kayo rate.

What Happened: Thankfully, this fight for a bogus version of a 154-pound title will be remembered for its sudden, explosive conclusion, and not for the 4½ unsightly rounds that preceded it. The pattern was fairly consistent throughout the first four rounds: Simms, 154, Norwalk, Connecticut, was the busier fighter, while the raw and amateurish Garcia, 154, Tijuana, Mexico, loaded up for heavy counterpunches. Typically, Garcia landed one or two of them a round—including a hurtful bodyshot in the opener—making all of the rounds close and difficult to score.

Simms celebrates as Garcia is counted out by referee Sammy Viruet. The one-punch win put Simms on the map and, to a lesser degree, did the same for his twin brother, Tarvis, and his manager, Kurt Emhoff.

In the fifth, southpaw Simms landed his first damaging punch, a lead left hook from a right-handed stance that stunned Garcia and made him clinch. As referee Sammy Viruet talked the fighters out of the clinch, Garcia forgot what Viruet had told him about 20 minutes earlier: "Protect yourself at all times." He dropped his hands and glanced to his left, and Simms connected with a violent left hook that the Mexican never saw. The life went out of Garcia's body as it crashed to the canvas, and Viruet counted him out at the 1:41 mark to record the evening's first upset.

Grade: B-

The Big Winner: Simms. With one punch, the 32-year-old New Englander went from a nobody to a somebody. How much of a somebody? With a 23-0 (18) record in the star-studded junior middleweight division, Simms might instantly be in line for a call from HBO or Showtime.

The Big Loser: Garcia. "Terra" can complain all he wants about the way the fight ended ("The referee was at fault," he insisted), but the Mexican was exposed in the 4½ rounds before that as a mechanical fighter with minimal offensive and defensive skill. He may still have the punch to reach the top, but the road there won't be as smoothly paved for a 22-1 (21) fighter as it would have been for an undefeated one.

Other Winners & Losers: The New Jersey State Athletic Commission is a loser for assigning Eugenia Williams, the judge behind the infamous Lewis-Holyfield I scandal, to score the fight. Good thing Simms took the result out of her incapable hands with a knockout ... Simms' twin brother Tarvis, an undefeated super middleweight, won big in the name-value stakes thanks to Travis' victory ... Simms' manager, Kurt Emhoff, who also has a piece of Cory Spinks, became a player overnight on this December evening at Boardwalk Hall.

JOHN RUIZ vs. HASIM RAHMAN

Setting The Stage: Of the eight "world title" bouts on the show, this was the most bogus—a WBA "interim" heavyweight title bout to determine who might get the title somewhere down the road if Roy Jones chooses to vacate. Add in the fact that the style matchup looked about as appetizing as a spit-bucket cocktail, and you had the potential lowlight of the evening awaiting you. The only saving grace was that Rahman carried a heavy enough right hand to possibly rid the heavyweight division of maul-master Ruiz once and for all.

What Happened: When both fighters volunteer the word "ugly" during their post-fight interviews, chances are the fight lived down to expectations. Ruiz, 241, Methuen, Massachusetts, fought his kind of fight—throw one punch and lunge into a prolonged clinch, then repeat for 12 rounds or until the opponent falls asleep—and Rahman, 246, Baltimore, Maryland, allowed him to. Rahman made decent use of his jab, but he hardly let any right hands go, and on the few occasions when powerpunches were exchanged, "The Rock's" ponderous paws made Ruiz look as quick as a flyweight by comparison. Ruiz shook the chinny ex-champ with a right and a left in round two, and in fact swept the first three rounds on all scorecards. The remaining nine rounds were wrestled—er, fought—on fairly even terms, and Ruiz escaped with a unanimous decision in one of the most consistently booed bouts you'll ever see. Barbara Perez (USA) had it 116-112, John Poturaj (USA) saw it 115-114, and Joseph Pasquale (USA) scored it 118-110. THE RING had it 116-113.

Grade: D-

The Big Winner: Norman Stone. You can't call either of the boxers the big winner, but you have to admit it was a good night for Larry Merchant's favorite trainer. In his first fight as Ruiz' chief second, Stone inspired his fighter to do exactly what was necessary to pull off the mild upset. Merchant had celebrated the end of the Norm Stone era when Ruiz fell to Jones nine months earlier, but "Stoney" made the celebration premature by getting his fighter back into the top 10.

The Big Loser: Rahman. Incredibly, the former heavyweight champ hasn't won a fight since he shocked Lennox Lewis back in April '01. He's now 0-3-1 since then, and at age 31, Rahman, 35-5-1 (29), is much closer to retirement than he is to another title reign.

Other Winners & Losers: Call Ruiz, 39-5-1 (27), a winner—though not an emphatic one, by any means—for clinching (pun intended) at least one more meaningful, lucrative fight ... Fres Oquendo, in turn, is a winner, as he looks on track for a very winnable all-Puerto Rican showdown with Ruiz ... In his first fight as Rahman's trainer, Roger Mayweather lost big ... King came out a loser too, since Rahman would have made a much more marketable victor than Ruiz ... Roy Jones was an indirect winner, as every time Ruiz gives a world-class opponent fits, it reminds us that what Jones did against him was indeed quite special.

A listless Rahman absorbs a stiff jab from Ruiz. In one of the most unwatchable heavyweight bouts you'll ever see, loser Rahman's stock plummeted, while winner Ruiz' advanced minimally.

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CORY SPINKS vs. RICARDO MAYORGA

Setting The Stage: Perhaps the most highly anticipated fight on the card, this bout for Mayorga's world welterweight title pitted the smokin' hot Nicaraguan champ against the tricky, upset-minded southpaw with the famous last name. When Mayorga disgustingly promised before the fight to reunite Spinks with his deceased mother, he made the bout personal—and that much more tantalizing.

What Happened: If you didn't see this fight for yourself, don't buy into what you've read and heard about Spinks putting on a dominant and brilliant display of boxing. He put on a brilliant display of defense, but his offense was virtually nonexistent. While Spinks, 146, St. Louis, Missouri, made Mayorga, 146, Managua, Nicaragua, look ridiculous as he missed with his wide, telegraphed punches, Mayorga, in a subtler, less theatrical way, was nearly impossible to hit as well, as Spinks fell just short with punch after punch. The result was a fight in which virtually no significant punches landed, a fight that was frequently interesting but rarely entertaining.

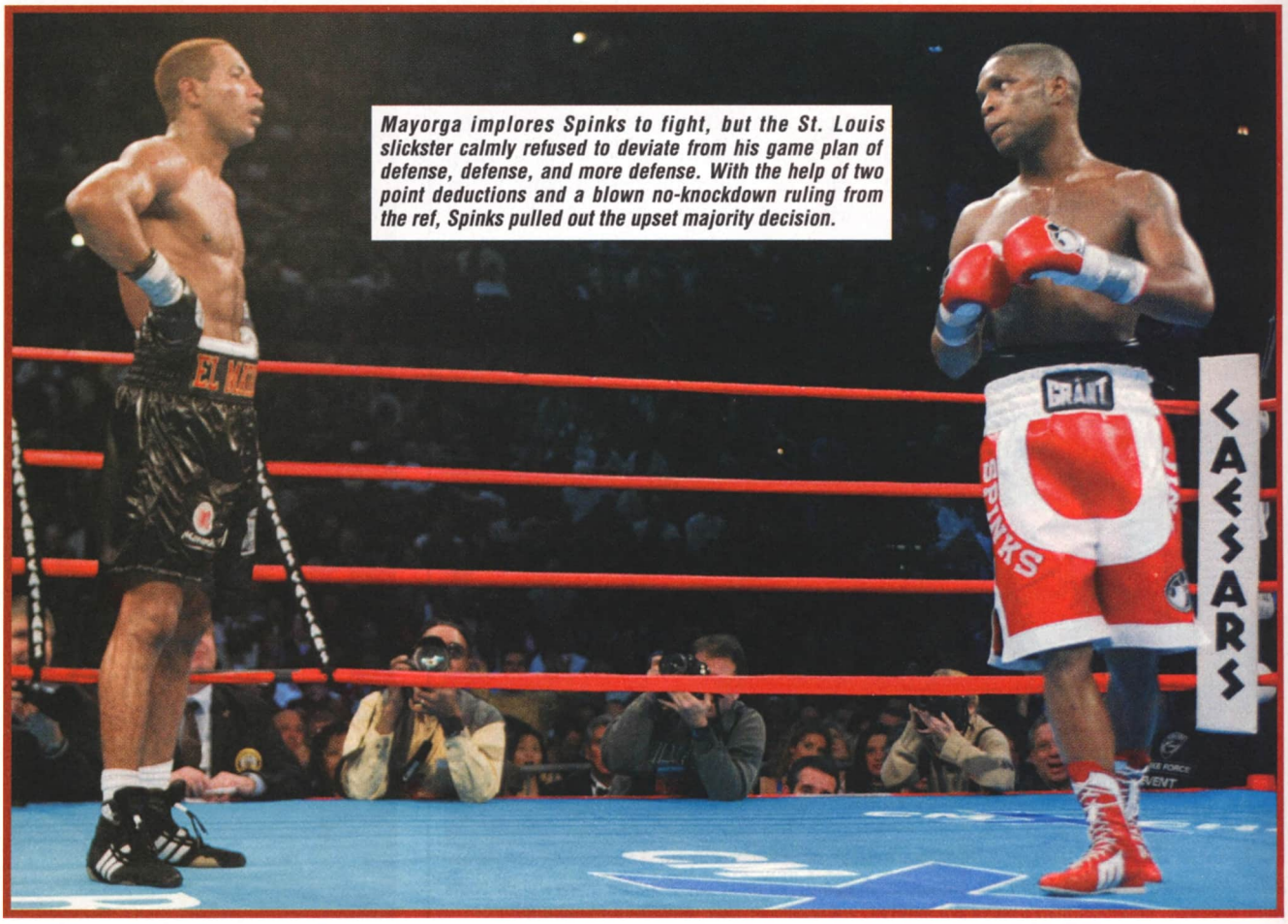
Spinks' advantage in hand speed was clear from the outset, yet it was Mayorga landing the handful of noteworthy punches, some to his own detriment: In the fifth, a flush right hand wobbled Spinks and bloodied his lip; after the bell to end the fifth, a late Mayorga shot cost him a point (he'd been warned after both the first and second rounds); in the eighth, a straight right hand knocked Spinks off-balance; in the 11th, Mayorga held Spinks behind the head as he struck him, earning another point deduction; and in the 12th, Mayorga knocked Spinks down with a right to the side, which referee Tony Orlando mistakenly called a slip. Along the way, both guys missed a lot (CompuBox didn't cover the fight, but our guess is that neither guy landed above 15 percent), and many rounds were uneventful and therefore difficult to score. Judge Arthur Ellensohn (USA) had it a 114-114 draw, Eugene Grant (USA) had Spinks on top 114-112, and John Keane (England) somehow made Spinks a 117-110 winner. In a fight that nobody really deserved to win, THE RING had Mayorga eking it out, 115-114.

Grade: C-

The Big Winner: Spinks. "The Next Generation" will benefit from the fact that this fight reached a limited pay-per-view audience, meaning many fans will know him as the man who tamed Mayorga without realizing how tame his performance was. To his credit, Spinks, 32-2 (11), showed a lot of poise and slickness, and will be launched into a much higher earnings bracket off this win.

The Big Loser: Shane Mosley. Sugar Shane had already signed off on a March '04 PPV megafight with Mayorga, but Spinks tore up that contract. Mosley would have probably beaten Mayorga easily for huge money; instead, he'll get far less money for a tougher fight against Winky Wright.

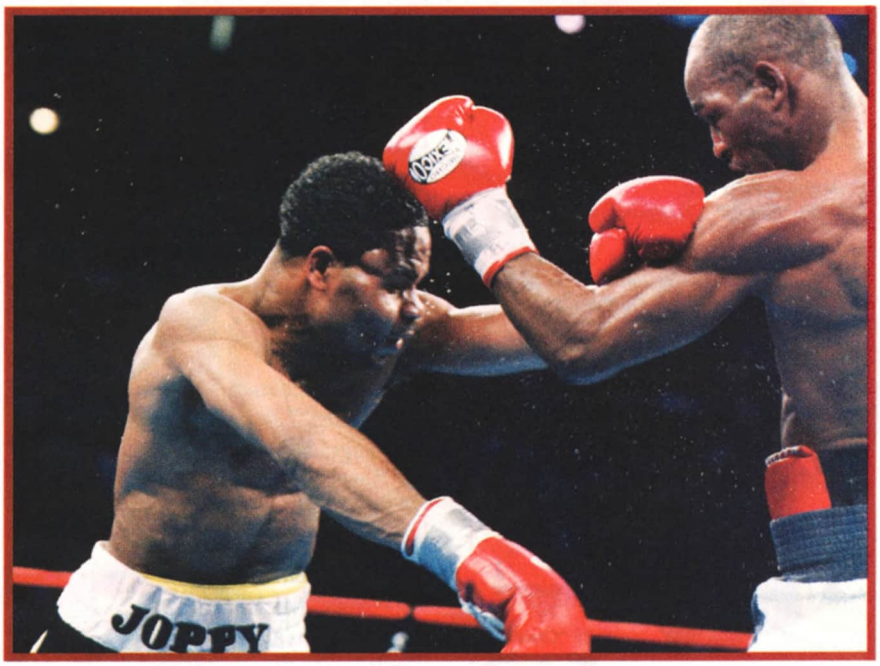
Other Winners & Losers: Wright won big, landing his long-awaited money fight as an indirect effect of this result … Mayorga, 25-4-1 (22), lost big, but at least he has the



Mayorga implores Spinks to fight, but the St. Louis slickster calmly refused to deviate from his game plan of defense, defense, and more defense. With the help of two point deductions and a blown no-knockdown ruling from the ref, Spinks pulled out the upset majority decision.

silver lining of a likely rematch, and he escaped a potential beating from Mosley. Still, he lost fans with his tasteless prefight smack talk and failure to back up his knockout boasts … Chris Byrd, in his first major color commentary gig, lost credibility by painting a one-sided picture in favor of—surprise, surprise—the slick, light-hitting southpaw … Zab Judah won for the second time on the evening, as Spinks' triumph might spell a world welterweight title shot for Judah in the near future … King suffered a loss, as Mayorga is an infinitely more commercially viable champ than Spinks … Judge Keane was a loser, not just because his score was so wide, but because along the way, he gave Mayorga's three most clear-cut rounds, the fifth, eighth, and 12th, to Spinks.

BERNARD HOPKINS vs. WILLIAM JOPPY



A horribly swollen Joppy catches a left from Hopkins in the late stages of their middleweight title fight. The dominant victory for Hopkins wasn't the way promoter King wanted his night to end.

Setting The Stage: Everything's relative, and though this looked like a minor mismatch coming in, it was downright mouth-watering compared to world middleweight champ Hopkins' last two defenses. Joppy was THE RING's number-one contender, after all. Still, unless Hopkins suddenly looked his age, the challenger didn't stand a chance. The only thing in question was whether he'd win his $50,000 side bet with "The Executioner" by lasting the distance.

What Happened: Joppy won his wager, but at a gruesome price. Looking 38 going on 22, Hopkins, 160, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was masterful, putting on one of the great infighting clinics of recent years. For the first three or four rounds, Joppy, 159, Silver Spring, Maryland, was right there with the slow-starting champ, but by the middle rounds, it was turning into a subtle massacre. So subtle, in fact, that the fans were losing interest, since the inside action probably looked like Ruiz-Rahman II to the folks in the cheap seats. Many fans turned to watch the brawls that broke out in the crowd in the fifth and eighth rounds, and many more started exiting by the end of the eighth. But those that stuck around saw a display of skill that turned downright sickening by the final four rounds.

Joppy somehow stayed on his feet following a thudding right hand in the 10th, but by the end of the round, his forehead was covered in knots and his cheeks were swelling as if Hopkins had reached in and removed his wisdom teeth. The 11th and 12th were painful to watch (THE RING made the final round a 10-8 for Hopkins without any knockdowns), but Joppy lasted the distance and won his bet. Was it worth it? His face and the scores of the three American judges—118-109 from John Stewart, 119-109 from Melvina Lathan, and 119-108 from Steve Weisfeld—suggest not. The best THE RING could give Joppy was one even round en route to a 120-108 tally.

Grade: C+

The Big Winner: Hopkins. Just by getting in the ring, the horribly inactive champ (would you believe he hasn't had a year with more than two fights since '97?) did himself some good. But Hopkins, 43-2-1 (31) with 1 no-contest, was more than just good on this night. He showed us that he's still the same pound-for-pound marvel that he was on that career-defining night against Felix Trinidad.

The Big Loser: Team Joppy. Not the fighter himself, but his handlers, who put Joppy's money above his health. Side bet or no side bet, trainer Adrian Davis should have kept Joppy in the corner after round 10. And seeing his grotesquely disfigured mug, co-managers Stan Hoffman and Steve Nelson (who also lost earlier in the night with Rahman) should have had the decency to send Joppy straight to the hospital afterward. Instead they sent him to the press conference, where we witnessed the surreal scene of Team Joppy standing around casually while a disbelieving Hopkins implored them to get Joppy out of there.

Other Winners & Losers: King lost big-time, because this was the final fight of his contract with Hopkins, and only an unlikely Joppy victory could have kept DK in the middleweight mix … Joppy, 34-3-1 (25), was a loser in the ring, though he'll be a winner in the big picture if he sticks to his postfight promise to retire … Referee Earl Morton was a winner, as he served as a shining example to meddlesome refs who refuse to apply the rules properly and let fighters *fight* on the inside. Morton was so good at this, in fact, that we'll forgive his letting the fight go on longer than it needed to … Felix Trinidad, who was in attendance, was a winner in a very indirect way. Should "Tito" make a comeback, he's apparently going to target Oscar De La Hoya and not Hopkins, a wise decision probably bolstered by Hopkins' brutal dominance. ■

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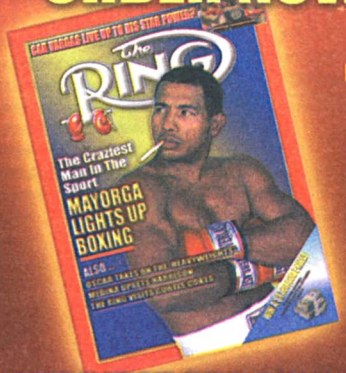

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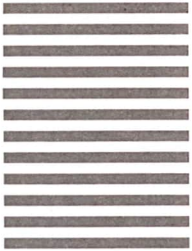

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YEAR-END SPECTACULAR!

THE BEST OF 2003

Compiled by Nigel Collins, Eric Raskin, Joe Santoliquito & William Dettloff

Every time we turn around these days, someone's getting an award for something or other: best actor, sexiest man alive, best dressed, best movie, most congenial, best reality series, best song by a newcomer, best reunion tour by desiccated rockers, etc. It never ends. Award ceremonies generate so much money for the businesses they're in, it's no wonder that in the entertainment industry alone we now have, among others, the Oscars, the Emmys, the People's Choice Awards, the MTV Video Music Awards, the Black Entertainment Awards, the Golden Globes, the Blockbuster Movie Awards. Cripes, is there anyone out there anymore who hasn't won an award?

It should comfort you to know that, long before all this Johnny-come-lately congratulatory silliness started, THE RING was quietly and judiciously handing out awards to boxing's best. How long exactly? Try 75 years. As you can see in the "Past Winners" pages of this, our annual RING Awards section, THE RING bestowed Fighter of the Year Honors on none other than heavyweight champion Gene Tunney—in 1928! For reference, that's around the same time Susan Lucci received her first Daytime Emmy award nomination.

This year's winners were not arrived at without some argument. In truth, we can't recall a recent year in which so many of the seven big categories—Fighter of the Year, Fight of the Year, Round of the Year, Knockout of the Year, Upset of the Year, Comeback of the Year, Event of the Year—were winnable by so many nominees. Indeed, there were at least three fights that could have been our Fight of the Year; we had at least five excellent rounds from which to choose Round of the Year; and 2003 featured no less than four major upsets in high profile fights. Several marquee fighters made impressive comebacks during the year, and, as always, there were a slew of great knockouts from which to pick.

Overall, it was a hell of a year. Whether or not we made the right choices, you can decide. If you think we did, please take a moment to nominate us for the first annual "RING Magazine Best Award List In Boxing Media Award." Hey, it's just one more award. What can it hurt?

FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

JAMES TONEY

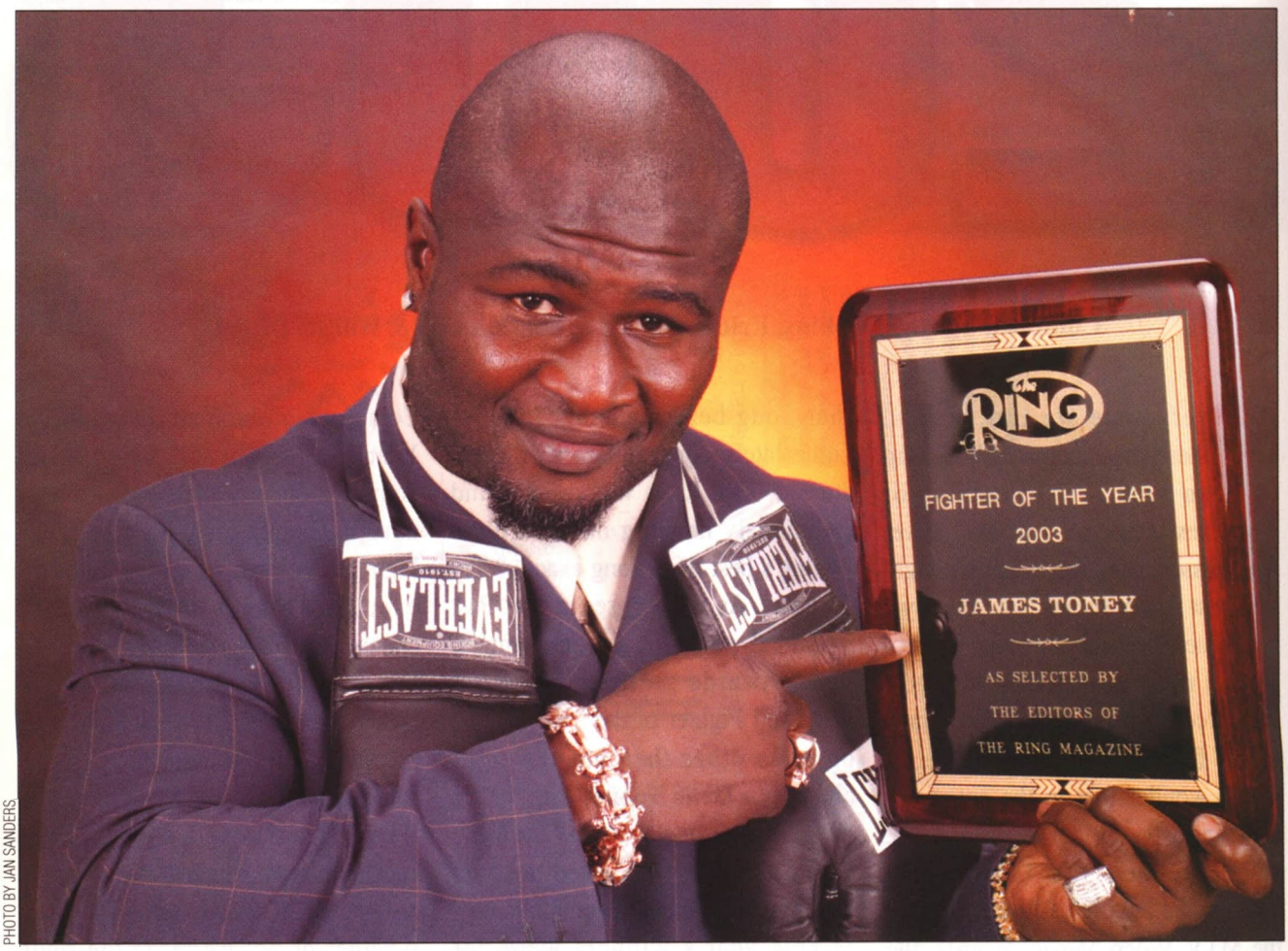


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

If you had predicted at the start of 2003 that James Toney would be Fighter of the Year, most people would have laughed in your face—that or wondered what mind-bending substance you had swirling around in your system. But there's Toney on the cover of this issue, proudly displaying a plaque proclaiming him the best fighter of the past year. And nobody is laughing anymore, least of all Vassiliy Jirov and Evander Holyfield. Or demanding that the editors supply urine samples.

Naturally, the one person who isn't surprised by Toney's career-rejuvenating year is old "Lights Out" himself.

"First and foremost, I feel honored because THE RING is the most recognized magazine in boxing, and THE RING is old school like myself," said Toney. "I'm also elated about it because I had goals of winning both Fighter of the Year and Comeback of the Year."

The fact that Toney also won the Comeback award *(see page 56)* is prece-

dent setting in that it is the first time in the history of THE RING's annual awards that the same fighter captured both in the same year. Moreover, among boxers who have won Fighter of the Year more than once, Toney, who also grabbed top honors in 1991, has the distinction of going the longest between accolades. He edged out Ray Robinson, Muhammad Ali, and Holyfield, who all went nine years between awards.

A lot has happened to Toney in the 12 years since he received his first Fighter of the Year award, and not all of it has been good. For a long time he seemed a lost soul, a victim of the same inner turmoil that powered his aggression. He already seemed headed for a meltdown when he lost to Roy Jones in '94, a defeat that sent Toney's career into a nosedive that he didn't really pull out of until last year.

According to Toney, the loss to Jones has been both a burden and a motivator. "It still eats at me," he admitted, "but I'm dealing with it better now than I did back then."

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Although it was Toney who did the fighting, promoter Dan Goossen should be given credit for moving "Lights Out" into the sort of significant fights he needed to have such a tremendous year in 2003.

A combination of factors, including the funk he went into following the loss to Jones, caused Toney to quit boxing altogether following a decision win over Steve Little in June '97. He didn't fight again until March '99.

"There were some personal problems that I was going through," Toney said. "I didn't watch no fights at all. I didn't want to see no fights. I just hung out and got as fat as a pig."

But lying around stuffing his face wasn't giving Toney the sort of fulfillment he craved, and to make matters worse, he was constantly reminded of his downfall at the hands of Jones.

"Every time I went somewhere, somebody would say, 'Damn, how could you let Roy Jones beat you?' It kept on haunting me, so I thought, *let me come back and show 'em that I really am a great fighter*," said Toney. "I wanted to show everybody

HONORABLE MENTION

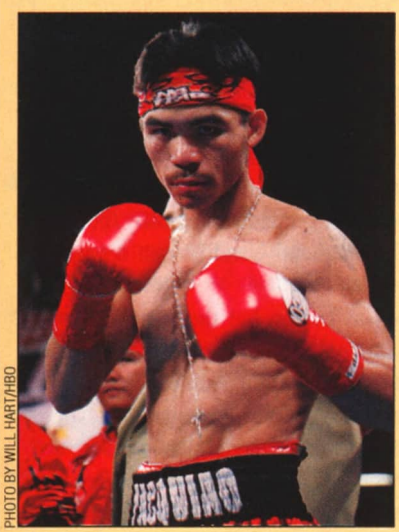


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Pacquiao became a star in 2003

Toney's main rival for top honors was Filipino sensation **Manny Pacquiao**, who knocked out pound-for-pound entrant Marco Antonio Barrera in the 11th round to win the world featherweight championship in dazzling style. While Pacquiao's victory was perhaps the biggest single win of the year, it was Pac-Man's only significant match in 2003, while Toney tallied two huge wins.

Going into December, **Ricardo Mayorga** also had an excellent chance of winning, as his pair of victories over 2002's Fighter of the Year, Vernon Forrest, had made him the welterweight champion and one of the most talked-about personalities in the sport. But losing the 147-pound title to **Cory Spinks** squashed his chances, and Spinks' victory was not the kind of dynamic performance necessary to win the big prize.

Heavyweight **Vitali Klitschko** made huge strides in his two 2003 outings, first pushing champ Lennox Lewis to the brink before being ruled unfit to continue because of a badly cut eye, and then dispatching Kirk Johnson inside of two rounds at Madison Square Garden to reinforce his position as the leading contender for the title.

Bantamweight **Rafael Marquez**, who caught people's attention in '01 and '02 with a pair of wins over Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson, continued to advance in '03 by winning the IBF bantamweight belt with an eighth-round kayo of previously undefeated Tim Austin. He followed with a decision defense over durable campaigner Mauricio Pastrana.

While lightweight champion **Floyd Mayweather** didn't come all that close to winning his second Fighter of the Year award (he won in '98), his seventh-round kayo of highly touted Phillip Ndou reminded us how sensational "Pretty Boy" can be when his hands are healthy.

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

Klitschko almost upset Lewis

Although he lost a majority decision, light heavyweight **Antonio Tarver** exposed Roy Jones' vulnerability in '03 and also tallied a decision over Montell Griffin, the only fighter to hold a pro victory over Jones.

how a real fighter should fight. I got the fire back slowly but surely, and now I'm burning even better than when I was younger."

At first Toney's resurrection sputtered along, and for a while it seemed like he'd never get back to the top. He put together a nice winning streak, but frequently seemed uninspired, and as recently as July '01 weighed a whopping 226 pounds for an off-TV bout with Wesley Martin. You could see that Toney still had all the moves, but the spark was missing and he frequently seemed to be sleepwalking through bouts.

If you can point to one thing as the final piece in the puzzle that had to be solved before Toney could once again fight up to the lofty standard he set in early-1990s, it would be promoter Dan Goossen. Other promoters had kept Toney busy, but were unable to move him into significant fights.

"Going with Dan was great," said Toney. "When me and Dan got together, he would say all you have to do is this and that, get yourself in great shape, and everything else will fall into place."

The first hint that things were jelling came in Toney's August '02 bout with Jason Robinson. It was an IBF eliminator for the right to challenge Jirov, the organization's cruiserweight titleholder. That Toney iced Robinson with one of the prettiest left hooks you've ever seen was not all that surprising, but the fact that he weighed 189 pounds, his lightest since 1997, was tangible evidence that he was finally buckling down to some serious gym work and showing discipline at the dinner table.

Then came 2003 and the two victories that made Toney a major player again: He handed Jirov the first defeat of his pro career and took the IBF cruiser belt in an

JAMES TONEY: THE YEAR THAT WAS

There were a lot of factors involved in Toney's remarkable comeback in 2003, but two that stand out are his enduring belief in himself and the splendid boxing skills he's developed since turning pro in 1988.

Toney, 67-4-2 (43), is among a handful of contemporary fighters who have mastered every nuance of the trade. Like middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins, he's a throwback who can do things inside the ring that the vast majority of today's fighters can only see when watching old fight films. And Toney does it all with a nonchalance belligerence that must infuriate his rivals.

One of the bonuses of Toney's finely honed technical ability is that despite having 73 pro bouts against the very best of his era, he has never really taken a serious beating. True, he's not as light on his feet at age 35 as he was back when he knocked out Michael Nunn in '91 to win the IBF middleweight title, but he doesn't have to be. When you have moves like Toney, foot speed is secondary. What's really important is knowing how to fight and putting that knowledge to use in the ring, something Toney did better than any of his contemporaries in 2003.

W 12 Vassiliy Jirov, Ledyard, Connecticut, April 26, 2003: To grasp the full significance of this fight, you have to remember the high esteem in which Jirov was held going into the match. He'd won a gold medal and the Val Barker Cup at the 1996 Olympics, streaked to 31 consecutive victories as a pro (27 via kayo), and was making his seventh defense of the IBF cruiserweight title. If Toney was to win a cruiser belt, he would have to do it against the man widely considered the best 190-pounder in the game.

Jirov, whose reputation as a hellacious bodypuncher was well-earned, waded into his challenger from the start, banging away with authority. Toney gave ground strategically, countering accurately. Both landed frequently, and it soon developed into a scorching encounter.

The 29-year-old Jirov was busier, but the more judicious Toney made virtually every punch count. As fortunes swayed back and forth, it was difficult to say who was getting the upper hand. At times it seemed that Toney would surely cave from Jirov's relentless pressure and digs to the body, but at others you couldn't help but wonder how many more flush right hands the defending titlist could absorb without crumbling.

Referee Steve Smoger docked Jirov a point for punching low in the eighth, but the man from Kazakhstan made up for it in the ninth when he mauled Toney along the ropes for prolonged periods. You couldn't have asked for a better fight.

The precision headshots that Jirov had walked through from the start began to take a toll in the 10th, and he was visibly hurt for the first time. Toney tried to take him out, but just couldn't find the right punches.

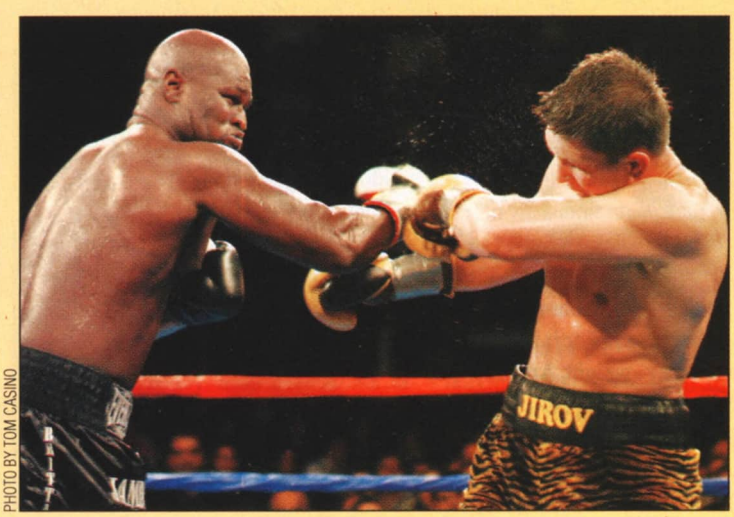


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Toney rocks Jirov with a right

electrifying battle, and then stopped future Hall of Famer Holyfield to enter the heavyweight top 10 for the first time in his career. Not only did Toney win these two fights in an exciting manner, the way he fought reminded everybody of what a special talent he is when sufficiently motivated.

Toney was already deep into training for his February 7 bout with gigantic Jameel McCline when he spoke to THE RING about the honors he'd won in '03 and his plans for '04.

"When you're a young fighter coming up, your goal is to become world champion. I've already been there and done that," Toney said. "Now I want to be immortal like Ray Robinson. That's the ultimate fighter right there. Not Ali. Ray Robinson because he did everything. Robinson, Archie Moore, Ezzard Charles, those are real legendary fighters."

When asked what he intends to do to gain the sort of status held by the legendary fighters he admires so much, Toney replied with his customary bravado.

"I want to knock out Lennox Lewis to become undisputed heavyweight champion, and then fight Roy Jones in the biggest grossing fight of all-time."

Sounds crazy, right? But you would have said the same thing if somebody had told you in early-2003 that Toney would beat Jirov and Holyfield before the year was over.

The McCline fight will be history by the time you read this, and if Toney is victorious, his wildly ambitious goals will seem a little less outrageous. But even if McCline beats him, nobody will ever be able to take away what Toney accomplished in 2003. For in that 12-month span, he was the very best in the world at what he does. And nobody can ask for more than that. ■

Amazingly, considering all the punishment they'd already absorbed, the 11th round was another two-way shootout, with both landing repeatedly. This time, however, it was Toney who seemed to feel the effects more, as the tension and suspense rose to an almost unbearable level.

"You've got to put him on his back," Freddie Roach yelled at Toney before sending him out for the final round. Toney grunted in agreement and then went about the task of fulfilling his trainer's instructions.

With the crowd at the Foxwoods Theater on its feet and in a state of near-hysteria, a left hook to the body followed by a pair of rights to the head finally put Jirov on the canvas as the round drew to a close. Somehow, he struggled up inside of the count and survived the remaining few seconds of the fight.

The judges didn't have the fight anywhere near as close as most observers, and Toney didn't actually need the big finish he staged to get the verdict. Judges Glenn Feldman and Melvina Lathan both scored it 117-109, while Steve Weisfeld had it 116-110, giving Toney a unanimous decision and the IBF title.

"It feels great to be champion again," said Toney. "It was a long time coming."

It would not, however, be anywhere near as long before he scored his next major triumph.

KO 9 Evander Holyfield, Las Vegas, Nevada, October 4, 2003: Okay, so this wasn't the same Holyfield who'd won both the undisputed cruiserweight and heavyweight championships. He was 40 years old, 2-3-2 in his last seven starts, and many fans and media members had been calling for his retirement for several years. Even so, "The Real Deal" had looked sharp winning a technical decision over Hasim Rahman two fights prior, and Toney had never fought a legitimate heavyweight contender before, let alone one who was a shoo-in to be a first-ballot Hall of Famer.

Still, it wasn't the fact that Toney beat Holyfield that was so extraordinary; it was the way he did it. Never in his long and glorious career has Holyfield taken such a one-sided beating. He did okay the first two or three rounds, but after that Toney beat the holy hell out of him. He did it by standing right in Holyfield's wheelhouse, making him miss, and then making him pay.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Toney sneaks a left past Holyfield's guard

"He stood right in front of me," said a bemused Holyfield afterward. "I thought it was impossible for a person to be right there and get away with it. But he did what he said he was going to do."

The beating intensified as the rounds went by, and by the end of the eighth, Holyfield's trainer, Don Turner, told him that he was going to stop the fight if Holyfield didn't start getting out of the way of Toney's punches.

Toney dished out more flush rights in the ninth, and then floored Holyfield with a series of left hooks. Referee Jay Nady didn't need to count. Turner climbed onto the apron and told him to stop the massacre, which Nady did at the 1:42 mark.

"Holyfield is a great fighter, and I have a lot of respect for him," said Toney. "I'm sorry I had to do that to him. I just did what I'm paid to do."

Because he does it so well, there should be even bigger paydays ahead.

FIGHT OF THE YEAR

ARTURO GATTI W 10 MICKY WARD

Gatti rams a right into Ward's face during their third thrilling encounter

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

It wasn't unreasonable to suspect going into it that the third Arturo Gatti-Micky Ward fight would be anti-climactic. After all, after losing the first fight to Ward in one of the better brawls of the last quarter century, Gatti found the right formula in the second: He moved constantly to his left and ducked low to avoid Ward's best weapon, that damned hook to the body. He stayed on his toes, jabbed, tied Ward up inside, and engaged him only in spots. He kept him honest with occasional right-hand bombs.

As a result, Gatti won the second fight handily. And really, outside of the third round, when he hurt Ward badly and then tried too hastily to finish him, the only real drama came from wondering what might happen if Ward could get Gatti to stand still again and punch, like he had in the first fight. He almost never did.

So how could the third fight, to be held in June at Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall and broadcast by HBO, be anything but a repeat of the second? Gatti knew what to do. He knew how to do it. If it was going to be special again, something had to level the playing field. Gatti would have to be handicapped somehow. Otherwise, if we wanted to experience again the wonderfully spontaneous brutality of the first fight, we'd have to rely on our memories.

For the first three rounds, Gatti was perfect, using the ring and his impossibly fresh legs to jab Ward silly and outmaneuver him. Then, in the fourth, a wayward Gatti right hand slammed into Ward's hip. We knew immediately that if Gatti's right wasn't busted, it might as well

have been. He couldn't use it. More importantly, Ward knew it too. Gatti had no more right with which to keep him honest. The playing field had been leveled.

Without the right hand to fear, Ward tore into Gatti halfway through the fourth, driving him across the ring with right crosses. Still grimacing from the pain in his hand, Gatti reeled and staggered, tried to escape along the ropes and, when he couldn't, stopped and punched. He rammed thudding jabs into Ward's pink, bloody face, and then some booming left hooks after, and then it was Ward who gave ground. Back and forth it went, Ward's rights against Gatti's hooks and jabs, and suddenly it looked a lot like the first fight. The 12,643 fans screaming their lungs out must have been incredulous at their immense good fortune.

Gatti still was better and did what he had to until Ward broke through at the end of the sixth and floored him with a right, instantly evening up the fight. Gatti came out hard in the seventh looking to get back the point, and again the two warred back and forth, Ward's right hands against Gatti's left hooks, and for a round it was as good as anything they put together the night we first met them as a pair. It was dramatic and compelling, and even if Gatti pulled away to win by scores of 97-92 and 96-93 (twice), and even if it wasn't quite what the first fight was, it was close enough. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Toney watches Jirov sink in the 12th round

Regardless of who you were rooting for, you had to be out of your seat and screaming when **James Toney** floored **Vassiliy Jirov** in the closing moments of their thrilling struggle for the IBF cruiserweight title in April. It was the kind of moment fight fans live for.

We knew going in that **Leonard Dorin** was an exciting guy, but who figured jab-and-move-southpaw **Paul Spadafora** would stand right with him and trade over 12 tight, bloody rounds when they met in May? The draw verdict, which allowed both to retain their alphabet titles, was okay with us.

Speaking of draws, not even the bizarre scoring controversy at the end could detract from the war **In-Jin Chi** and **Michael Brodie** put on for the vacant WBC featherweight title in October. It was mesmerizing.

Heavyweight champion **Lennox Lewis** had never seemed to us to be a throw-down-and-brawl type of guy, but that's just what he did in his bloody slugfest with **Vitali Klitschko** in June. By the time they stopped it in the sixth to keep Klitschko's eye from falling out, we were sore just from watching.

Boxer vs. puncher matchups seldom yield great excitement, but don't tell that to **Joel Casamayor** and **Diego Corrales**, who put on a wonderfully entertaining scrap in October. Though dropped twice and bloodied, Corrales had also floored Casamayor and may have been a punch or two away from doing it again when it was stopped after the sixth round.

Speaking of junior lightweights, when do we get to see **Jorge Barrios** give someone hell again the way he did **Acelino Freitas** in their brawl in August? Before Freitas almost decapitated him with a desperation right hand in the 11th, Barrios was right in it.

You couldn't really blame **Luis Perez** and **Felix Machado** for not duplicating in their rematch in December the exciting street fight they gave us in their first match, back in January. That one, which saw Perez break Machado's cheekbone and take the IBF junior bantamweight title, was as brutal as any we've seen at that weight.

Speaking of rematches, anyone who says the originals are always better didn't see the **Hector Quiroz-Antonio Diaz** rematch in May. Quiroz got revenge for a 12th-round stoppage loss with a ninth-round kayo win in a spectacular war.

In a wild brawl in Scotland in October, **Michael Gomez** and unbeaten **Alex Arthur** created a fight as electric as the atmosphere. Hurt in nearly every round, Arthur remained game and dangerous until Gomez dropped him three times in round five to seal the upset.

Any time you think fighters are in it just for the money, remember **Scott Pemberton's** exciting decision win over **Omar Sheika** in July. Neither guy was a millionaire at the end, but they both should have been.

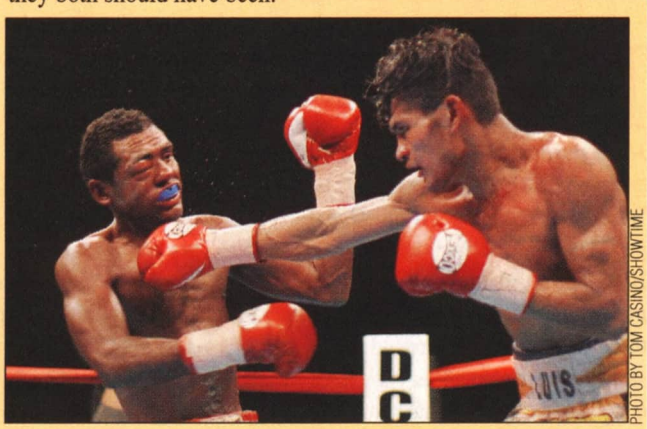


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Perez belts Machado in their fabulous first fight

ROUND OF THE YEAR

ACELINO FREITAS-JORGE BARRIOS
ROUND 11

Freitas comes off the floor to deck Barrios in the 11th round

PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

It wasn't the best fight we'd seen all year, but Acelino Freitas' 130-pound alphabet title defense against rugged Jorge Barrios on Showtime had been plenty entertaining going into the 11th round. Barrios, unknown and from Argentina, had proved much tougher than we'd expected. He'd taken Freitas' best right hands and not succumbed to them. He bled from three distinct gashes around his eyes, and still trudged right to Freitas, willing, apparently, to bleed out right there in the ring if it meant getting close enough to do some damage. He clumsily wiped the blood from around his eyes when he had the time and distance, and when he could, he availed himself of referee Jorge Alonso's shirt sleeves.

Freitas, though far superior athletically, was having one of those nights when his technique was something less than perfect. Whether that had to do more with Barrios' stubborn ungainliness or Freitas' own lack of self-control is hard to say. Maybe it was both. Either way, the challenger was in the fight, perhaps even leading. He'd floored Freitas, though not seriously, in the eighth round, and in several rounds gave as good as he got. Both guys were justifiably winded by the time the 11th round started, so we figured we'd already seen the best we were going to see. We were wrong.

Roughly 40 seconds into the round, Barrios, his blood dripping and splashing everywhere, tried a straight punch, a left jab, and nailed Freitas squarely on the jaw with it. A followup one-two did the same, and Freitas went down hard, this time badly stunned. He pulled himself up at five, and got a critical break when referee Alonso took more time that he should have

retrieving Freitas' mouthpiece. He shoved it at trainer Oscar Suarez, who rinsed it off slowly, meticulously. A job well done by the cornerman.

When they were done, Barrios, by this time at minimum a quart low, jumped on Freitas as well as he could and whaled away the way a desperate, exhausted fighter does when he's so close to home. It was hard not to root for him as he punched away at Freitas for what seemed like a long while. He tried everything he could to finish him, but missed a lot, and not by a small margin. It didn't matter to the crowd, who stood and roared joyously at their bloody underdog. It didn't help; Freitas got his sense back and moved out to the center of the ring. Barrios let him; most of the round, as well as his remaining energy, was gone.

But Freitas wasn't content to let the round go. It had gone too badly for him, even though he'd survived. With Barrios huffing and bleeding in front of him, and the bell about to ring, he let go a thundering overhand right that caught Barrios in exactly the spot you'd want to catch a guy if you wanted to knock him cold. Barrios went down hard and jumped up unsteadily at three, a dark red splotch on the canvas where he'd fallen.

A minute's time wasn't enough for Barrios to recover, and Freitas finished him off 50 seconds into the 12th round, but it was the amazing 11th round that delighted like no other in '03. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

Calzaghe down before rallying to TKO Mitchell

Few expected **Joel Casamayor** and **Diego Corrales** to exchange knockdowns, but that's what happened in the fourth round of their wonderful shootout in October. First, Casamayor dropped Corrales with a straight left. Thinking Corrales was more hurt than he was, Casamayor went after him and promptly was dropped by a ripping hook. They went at it some more with both guys getting tagged and hurt again before the end of the round.

The only thing that was wrong with the second round of **Joe Calzaghe**'s thrilling win over **Byron Mitchell** in June was that it ended too soon. After getting pummeled early in the round, Mitchell blasted Calzaghe to the canvas with an overhand right. Calzaghe got up, weathered a few more big shots, and then started teeing off on Mitchell, eventually dropping him, and soon forcing what was probably a premature stoppage.

The 12th round of **James Toney**'s win in April over **Vassiliy Jirov** started like most of the rounds before it—with Toney countering off of the ropes while Jirov pummeled him to the body. They went at it harder than ever near a corner as the clock ticked down until, with almost no time left, a Toney combination sent Jirov to the canvas, sealing the outcome. It was gripping.

Jeffrey Hill had **Manuel Gomez** all but knocked out in the very first round in August. But just when you thought he was done, Gomez reached back with a booming right that put Hill down and out. Great stuff.

Rafael Marquez and **Tim Austin** will forever recall the eighth round of their bantamweight fight in February. After hurting Marquez in the seventh, Austin looked to close in the eighth and rocked Marquez in a corner. Marquez fired back hard and they both scored heavily until Austin was sent sailing by a hard combination before getting stopped later in the round.

The brilliant war between **In Jin Chi** and **Michael Brodie** in October featured one of the best rounds in recent featherweight history. Early in the second, Chi sent Brodie hurtling to the canvas with a thundering three-punch combination. Brodie got up and engaged Chi hard, and they slugged away at one another for the balance of the round. It was magnificent.

In Britain's other sensational '03 slugfest, **Alex Arthur** seemed done going into the fifth round against **Michael Gomez**, but he somehow summoned the strength to hurt Gomez badly with a torrent of bodyshots. Gomez rebounded, however, knocked Arthur down three times, and forced the stoppage in a wild, action-packed finish.

Take your pick as to which was the better round in the final fight between **Micky Ward** and **Arturo Gatti**: In the fourth, Gatti broke his right hand on Ward's hip, and Ward, aware of Gatti's sudden vulnerability, battered him around the ring, scoring with dozens of hooks and rights. Late in the round, Gatti gritted his teeth and stormed back into it with a series of hooks that left Ward reeling. If that doesn't do it for you, try the seventh. Back and forth they went, Gatti landing hooks, Ward landing rights, until the crowd was so loud you couldn't hear the bell. Man, we love those guys.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Brodie rips Chi with a right

KNOCKOUT OF THE YEAR

ROCKY JUAREZ KO 10 ANTONIO DIAZ

Fighters don't fight just for the money and fame and recognition it gets them if they do it right and well. Whether or not they know it, they fight too in pursuit of those singular, fleeting moments when all of it clicks into place for a split second and they get to know a nirvana the rest of us will never glimpse. It's what an all-star cleanup hitter feels when he lays the fat part of his bat on a fastball that's out over the plate, or what a tennis pro experiences when he drives a forehand shot dead down the line. It had to be what Rocky Juarez felt when he laid out Antonio Diaz in July.

We would imagine it felt good, too, that when Juarez scored the Knockout of the Year, it was in front of his hometown fans at Reliant Park in Houston, Texas. It probably didn't hurt either that it was a nationally televised fight on Showtime. All those things helped make it a good evening for Juarez—but it wasn't an easy one. And it's fitting that it wasn't. That's a big part of what made the ending so memorable.

Diaz, only a moderately talented fighter out Brooklyn, New York, by way of the Dominican Republic, is tall and stringy for a featherweight, and not in a good, sturdy way like Alexis Arguello or Danny Lopez were. Against Juarez at least, he lacked the straight punching ability and sinewy strength he would have needed to back Juarez up, which is the way you beat him. So he did what he could with what he had. He jabbed a lot. He jumped around on the

Juarez hooks Diaz, who goes down for the count

PHOTOS BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

outside and threw a lot of clubbing, cuffing, long-armed punches. Juarez, stronger and infinitely better mechanically, countered him with crackling hooks and crosses, but never could find the sweet spot. It looked maybe like Diaz didn't have one.

We found out after it was over that the hometown judges had Juarez way ahead, but Diaz was right there the whole time. He soaked up a lot of bodypunches and some wicked shots to the head, too, and never relented, never got the look on his face that overmatched fighters get when they realize, usually too late, that they're in over their head. He kept at Juarez with those long arms, snaking in a decent right hand or left hook more than every once in a while, making it hard for Juarez to look as good as he wanted to. Fighters with nothing to lose know how to keep it close like that.

Every indication was that it would go the distance, and for all we knew, a big upset might even have been brewing, especially if Diaz finished strong. But about a minute into the 10th round, Juarez got close near one of the corners and rapped Diaz with a stiff combination, the kind Diaz had been taking all afternoon, and a right hand at the end hurt him. He got brave like hurt fighters do and tried to fire back with those long arms, but the connection was bad, and Juarez beat him to the punch with a picture-perfect left hook that landed right where it's supposed to. Lights out. It's what fighters live for. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Mesi mauls Williamson with a first-round hook

If you're going to score a spectacular kayo, it's best to do it on a high-profile Don King card, right? That's what **Travis Simms** did in December when **Alejandro Garcia** languished inside in a half-clinch during the fifth round, then stepped straight back, all nice and relaxed with his chin up in the air. So what's a puncher like Simms to do? Just what he did, throw a big left hook. And Garcia went to sleep.

Say what you will about today's **Mike Tyson**. He can half-ass his way through training camp. He can do his roadwork in a strip joint. He can disappear for weeks on end and come back with his face all tattooed, and then with one right hand he can knock a big, strong heavyweight into next week. Ask **Cliff Etienne**. He probably still can't remember large chunks of last February.

It may turn out that **Joe Mesi** is a pretty fair heavyweight. It may turn out that he's not even that. Whichever way it goes, he'll always have September's spectacular first-round splattering of fellow prospect **DaVarryl Williamson** to look back on. He couldn't have asked for a better partner.

If you were welterweight **Jeffrey Hill**, you had to feel good about the way you were beating the stuffing out of veteran **Manuel Gomez** in the first round of their meeting in March. It had to feel great, landing anything you wanted really, with Gomez all hurt and ready to go. Yes sir. Must have felt great, too, to wake up after Gomez landed a bomb of a right to end it in that very same round. Smelling salts, anyone?

You had to wonder what a great big heavyweight like **Wladimir Klitschko** would do when he got tagged on the chin by a good puncher. **Corrie Sanders** showed us in two rounds in March. It wasn't pretty.

With featherweight **Rocky Juarez** knocking guys cold every other week, you have to wonder where people get this idea that little guys can't punch. The hook Juarez laid on poor **David Murillo** in September—in 26 seconds of the first round, no less—would have knocked over a barn.

If it wasn't so much fun on a very fundamental level to watch a smaller guy repeatedly knock down a much bigger one, we would have felt awful for **Michael Grant** when **Dominick Guinn** bounced him all over the canvas in June on the way to a seventh-round kayo win. But this is a rough game and big guys always seem to get the girls, so, well, sorry Mike. Don't be so big next time.

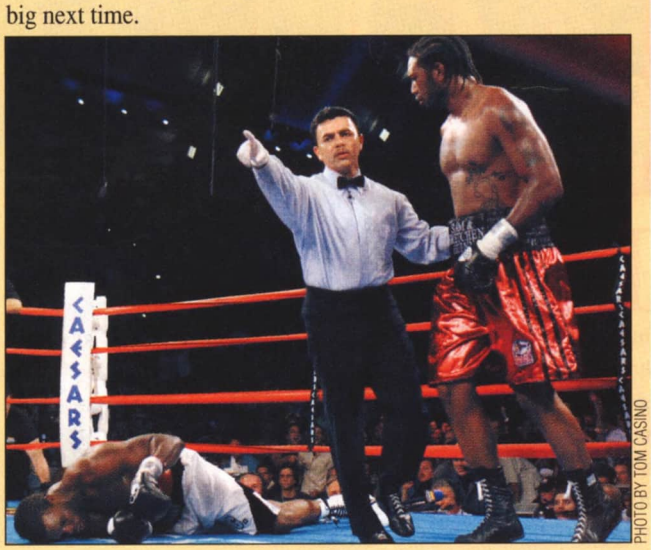


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Guinn floors Grant for a final time

UPSET OF THE YEAR

CORRIE SANDERS KO 2 WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO

Highly favored Klitschko crumbles under Sanders' assault

PHOTO BY HOLLY STEIN/HBO

If you listened hard, you could hear what a smattering of guys who knew what they were talking about were saying about Wladimir Klitschko. That while he was big and affable and bright and a good hitter and all that other stuff we like our heavyweights to be, he would drop like a stone the first time a big puncher touched him. And if that puncher happened to be world heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis, as it appeared would be the case, probably within a year, Klitschko wouldn't make it out of the early rounds. You could bet on it.

Most of us didn't believe those guys. The suits at HBO certainly didn't. And why should they? Other than displaying an occasional and vaguely irritating tendency toward passivity, Klitschko had done everything well, right up to his fight with hulking South African Corrie Sanders in Germany in March. He rolled over the usual second-tier heavyweight flotsam—Frans Botha, Monte Barrett, Ray Mercer, Charles Shufford, et al—with frightening ease, and also beat up highly regarded Chris Byrd. By the time he stopped streaking newcomer and fellow giant Jameel McCline, we'd already forgiven his 1998 loss to Ross Puritty. What were those guys talking about? How could this guy miss?

So you couldn't blame anyone for making Klitschko a big favorite over Sanders. It was true he was a curious choice for one so near a title shot; a big southpaw with oddly fast hands, Sanders could hit, and if

you needed a reference you could ask Hasim Rahman, who had to dig deep to beat him down in a wild brawl in 2000. Or Al Cole, who didn't make it out of the first round. Or Bobby Czyz, who didn't make it out of the second.

But Sanders was 37 years old. That meant he was safe. He was mostly inactive and, by his own admission, played golf more than he trained anymore. So of course he would lose. It's what he was there for, and if he was lucky, someday he'd be the answer to the trivia question: "Whom did Wladimir Klitschko kayo in his last fight before becoming the world heavyweight champion?" That was if he was lucky. If he was unlucky, his performance would be so forgettable he wouldn't even warrant recollection. Either way he was there to provide a light workout. That's all.

In the first round, and in front of thousands of Klitschko devotees in Hannover, Germany, Sanders walked to Klitschko and planted a straight left on the point of his jaw. It was the moment we'd waited for. What would Klitshcko do? Would he walk through it? Would he clinch? He did neither. He fell over. He fell over three more times after that before it was stopped in the second. Essentially, he'd dropped like a stone every time Sanders touched him. By the end, of course, Sanders' feat had become less surprising than instructive. Given his odd combination of separate strengths, we should have expected it almost. But we didn't. Almost no one did. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Pacquiao punishes Barrera with a bodyshot

Nobody doubted **Manny Pacquiao's** ability, but come on—beating the great **Marco Antonio Barrera**? Yet there was Pacquiao anyway, smacking Barrera all over the ring in November on the way to stopping him in the 11th and winning the world featherweight title. Amazing.

There was every reason to believe that 6-1 favorite **Vernon Forrest**, fresh off two wins over the mighty Shane Mosey, would, at the very least, box the bejesus out of rough and tumble **Ricardo Mayorga** and retain the world welterweight title. So what happens in their match in January? Mayorga rocks Forrest in the first and knocks him flat in the third. So much for the odds.

Going into his fight in December with Mayorga, the fight game's fastest rising star, you had to consider **Cory Spinks** no better than maybe a poor man's Vernon Forrest, right? Wrong. He did to Mayorga what Forrest couldn't: He boxed and moved and scored and stayed out of the way of Mayorga's power-punches well enough to win a close decision and the welterweight crown.

It was beginning to look like **Dariusz Michalczewski** would be able to run over and through Roy Jones' sloppy seconds for, well, about as long as he wanted to. But **Julio Gonzalez**, who didn't win a round against Jones, outhustled and outfought him in October to take a clear decision—in Germany no less.

Juan Valenzuela was supposed to be just another brief pit stop for former Olympian and junior welterweight prospect **Ricardo Williams** in their February meeting. Turned out he was a major speed bump. He outfought and out-toughed the faster, heavily favored Williams over 10 hard rounds.

Speaking of former Olympians turned junior welterweight prospects, thunderous-punching **Muhammad Abdullaev** was having things mostly his way in a fight in June when underachieving **Emmanuel Clottey** floored him in the 10th. No problem, right? Wrong. Abdullaev, who was badly shaken, lost track of the count and was counted out.

Coming off his drubbing of former titlist Wayne McCullough, we all expected Scotland's **Scott Harrison** to trounce four-time former titlist **Manuel Medina** when they met in July. We should have known better. Medina, in typical fashion, boxed rings around a completely befuddled Harrison and walked away with a decision, right on Harrison's home turf. When will we learn?

When Venezuela's **Lorenzo Parra** decisioned **Eric Morel** in December, he didn't just claim the WBA flyweight belt. He also bumped off the number-one fighter in the division. When a virtually unknown challenger does that, it qualifies as a major upset.

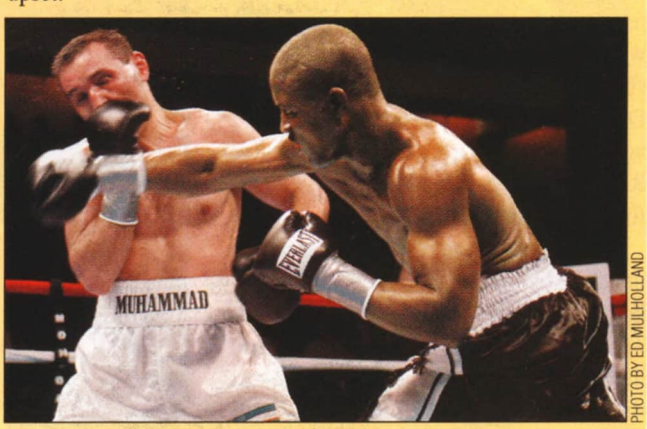


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Clottey (right) hands Abdullaev his first loss

COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

JAMES TONEY

By this time, we were supposed to have forgotten all about James Toney. He was supposed to be another sad, fat ex-fighter who allowed all the bitterness and anger over what had happened to his career ruin him. We were supposed to remember him, if we remembered him at all, as a heck of a middleweight who wasn't disciplined enough to get in shape and, as a result, struggled with Dave Tiberi and the like all those years ago. And then as a guy who still did good work when he moved up, but who then was ruined by the combination of Roy Jones' genius and his own slovenly habits.

In the late-1990s, Toney was like a guy who was dead already, but didn't know it. He kept showing up at fight cards, obese and grumpy, ranting about Jones and looking a year or two away from a diabetic coma. You had to feel sorry for him even if he wasn't the kind of guy who inspired sympathy. He fought sparingly. When he felt like it he got in reasonable shape, and when he didn't feel like it he didn't. It showed in his performances. He lost to Drake Thadzi, beat Steve Little. Struggled against Terry McGroom, bored us against Ramon Garbey. Fought at heavyweight, fought at cruiserweight. Whatever.

Even at his worst, Toney was doing things in the ring that showed you he still knew how to fight and still loved doing it. The roll and counter right was still there, the little uppercut on the inside was still there, the short hooks to the body still there. He'd make a hell of a trainer, we thought. All the knowledge was there, all

Toney rejuvenated his career in 2003

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

the skill. If only he'd been able to get it together.

He did. Right around the time he got together with promoter Dan Goossen, a light went on in Toney's head and off in his refrigerator. He got in shape—not middleweight shape or even light heavy, but in good shape for an older cruiserweight. He got sharper in the ring and looked more focused, and by the time he stopped Michael Rush and Jason Robinson in back-to-back fights in 2002, he looked better than he had in years. Maybe it was the promise of a shot at Vassiliy Jirov if he kept winning. Maybe that was all it took.

The Jirov fight was a masterpiece. Jirov was younger, stronger, better-conditioned, and favored to win. He would have beaten perhaps any other cruiser that night. But Toney chopped away at him and chopped away at him with counters, and in the last round all that smart work produced a knockdown that we thought he needed but didn't. (The judges had liked the good work, too.).

Next came Evander Holyfield, and a lot of people thought Holyfield would be too big and strong, even in his current aged state, for Toney to handle. Toney bulked all the way up to 217 pounds and decimated him. Now he's just what he's always wanted to be: a top-10 heavyweight. And we don't have to worry yet about how to remember him. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Mosley is back on top after beating De La Hoya

It couldn't have been much worse for **Shane Mosley** going into his rematch with Oscar De La Hoya in September. He'd lost twice to Vernon Forrest and looked ordinary in a no-contest against Raul Marquez. Another loss might have been irreparable and dropped him altogether from the pound-for-pound debate. But in a taut, close struggle, he out-willed De La Hoya and fully revived a career that was badly sagging.

You could make the argument that **Corrie Sanders** wasn't even really a full-time prize fighter anymore when he pancaked Wladimir Klitschko in two rounds in March. He'd fought just once a year in four of the last five years, and in his only fight of real import, Hasim Rahman stopped him (in what was admittedly a war). But Klitschko's people didn't pick him as an opponent because they thought he could win. They picked him because they thought he'd already gotten as far as he ever was going to get. They were wrong.

Not many were willing to go on record picking **Mark Johnson** against younger, quicker, fresher Fernando Montiel in their meeting in August. There was little reason to—Johnson clearly was on a downward trend, losing twice to Rafael Marquez and looking worn in a win over journeyman Ricardo Medina. But his speed and punch intimidated Montiel over the first half of the fight, and his experience guided him through the second to get him a majority decision win and put him back in the running at junior bantam.

After losing six times in his last eight fights and then getting robbed against Daniel Judah, we wouldn't have blamed **Glencoffe Johnson** if he'd said to hell with it and quit. But he didn't. He persevered, and before we knew it, he'd upended top-rated Eric Harding over 12 rounds in May. Six months later, he fought Clinton Woods to a draw in Great Britain, for an alphabet title no less, and again, most thought he won that one. You can't keep this guy down.

After his loss to Chris Byrd in 2000, you could count the number of true **Vitali Klitschko** believers (outside of Germany and the Ukraine) on one hand. No more. And not just because of his subsequent wins over the Larry Donalds and Vaughn Beans of the world. Klitschko went from nowhere to being the hottest heavyweight in the world after giving Lennox Lewis all hell in June, and then blowing away the shamefully unprepared Kirk Johnson in December. You couldn't ask for a better year.

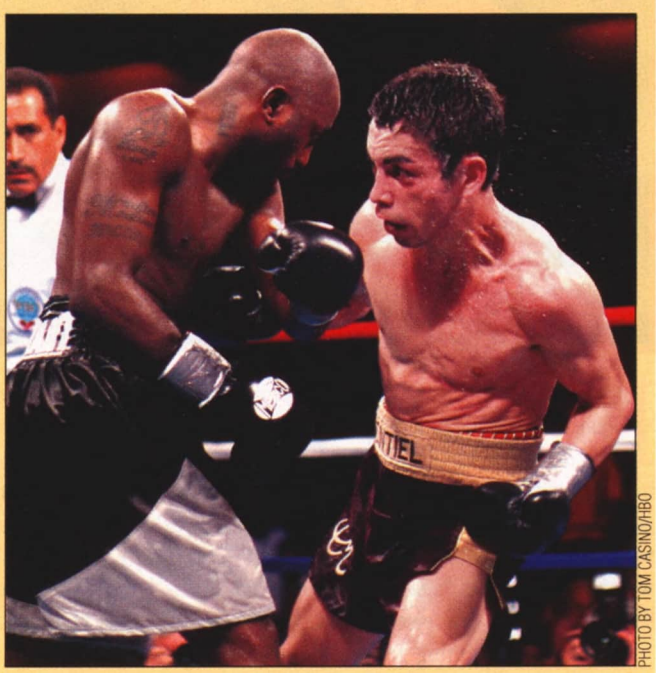


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/HBO

"Too Sharp" turns back the clock to beat Montiel

EVENT OF THE YEAR

ROY JONES FIGHTS AT HEAVYWEIGHT

Jones shows his heavyweight mettle versus Ruiz

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

It was the best thing Roy Jones could have done. Any time the world's best fighter does something in the ring or in his career that borders on historic, it's good for the game and good for him. But it was especially good when Jones, a guy who not all that long ago was a 160-pound fighter, became a heavyweight.

It was the best thing Jones could have done because it fulfilled a sort of promise he made to us a while back, when he floated out there the idea of fighting heavyweights and then started scouting opponents. If he'd never said it, we never would have thought of it. But he did, so we worked up the images and handicapped him against this or that guy, and even if it was only Buster Douglas he was going to face, hey, that was a start. But then he didn't even do that, and we were left wondering why he'd gotten us so worked up about it in the first place if he wasn't going to do anything. Nobody likes a tease.

It was the best thing Jones could have done because it was what all the great old fighters did when they could. They all took on the bigger guys and it didn't matter so much to them that the other guys were heavier and stronger. Archie Moore didn't mind and Harold Johnson didn't and Bob Foster didn't. Michael Spinks didn't mind. If Jones was as great in his day as those guys were in theirs, he was obligated to try

a heavyweight. No matter that he'd already won titles at middleweight, super middle, and light heavy. Everyone knows the belts don't mean as much now as they did then, even with a guy like Jones. Everyone knew where the real challenge was.

It was the best thing Jones could have done even if it was against John Ruiz, who almost nobody thinks can fight very well except for, well, the guys he fights. That really wasn't the point to a lot of us. Jones could have fought someone who hadn't given Evander Holyfield hell three times, who hadn't outwilled Kirk Johnson, for whatever that's worth. Even if you don't think much of Ruiz, he had a belt, more or less, and if that's what it was going to take for Jones to finally do it, then who were we to argue?

It was the best thing Jones could have done because it woke up everyone else to the possibility of guys fighting outside their best weight classes and at catch weights. Before we knew it, there was Floyd Mayweather calling out Oscar De La Hoya, and middleweight champ Bernard Hopkins negotiating with cruiserweight king James Toney. Before long, Toney was a heavyweight, too. It felt a little like Greb calling out Dempsey, or Walker challenging Schmeling, and what could be wrong with that? In this age when everything bigger is automatically thought of as better, it reminded us that bigger isn't better. Better is better. Jones proved it, and it was the best thing he could have done. For all of us. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

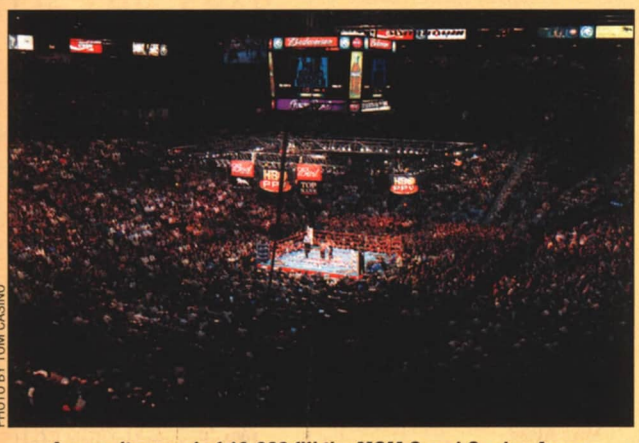


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

A capacity crowd of 16,268 fill the MGM Grand Garden Arena for Mosley-De La Hoya II

If you didn't know better, you'd have thought the **Oscar De La Hoya-Shane Mosley** rematch in September was just a prize fight. But it became very newsworthy stuff, especially when Mosley got a decision many, but far from everybody, thought De La Hoya deserved. It got even better when Bob Arum accused the Vegas commission of some dirty shenanigans, and when De La Hoya told us he was going to drain his considerable bank account to launch an investigation into the scoring. Headlines galore. You had to love it.

As bonkers as De La Hoya and Arum were, they had nothing on former WBC heavyweight titleholder **Frank Bruno**, who was hospitalized for a spell with a bout of severe depression. Over several months we'd been hearing that Bruno was behaving erratically following his divorce, and it came to a head in September when he was involuntarily committed to an Essex, England, psychiatric hospital.

Speaking of woman problems, former IBF lightweight beltholder **Paul Spadafora** was arrested in October in McKee's Rocks, Pennsylvania, and charged with attempted murder in the shooting of his girlfriend, Nadine Russo. When police first arrived, Spadafora and Ms. Russo said they'd been ambushed by a couple of gun-wielding maniacs. Witnesses later told police a different story, and Spadafora will have his day in court.

Speaking of maniacs, our friends at the **WBC** filed for bankruptcy protection in April. The move was in direct response to the $31-million judgment that went against them and in favor of German light heavyweight Graciano Rocchigiani last year. Our only question is this: When a company goes bankrupt, aren't they supposed to close down, or issue layoffs, or at the very least stop appointing so-called champions? They're out of business like Tupac Shakur is out of business. Which is to say not so much.

For his unique "**Night Of The Undisputed**" show in Atlantic City in December, Don King had nearly everybody in his stable in action. On the strength of eight 12-rounders, including three RING championship fights, King sold out Boardwalk Hall, making a major event without a single superfight on the card.

Many in the fight business gasped when ESPN announced in December that it would no longer pay promoters a $50,000 licensing fee for shows telecast on ***Friday Night Fights***. It claimed the ratings no longer justified the expense and, as always, sponsors were difficult to find. The suits at ESPN said simply that promoters would have to start promoting again. The rest of us saw it as a move by ESPN to get out of the fight business, but if you watch *Friday Night Fights* with any regularity, you know they stopped airing high-quality, competitive fights on a regular basis a year or two ago, so if the show does go off the air, it probably won't be missed as much as it should be.

Friday Night Fights *are on the ropes*

PAST WINNERS

FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

1928: Gene Tunney
1929: Tommy Loughran
1930: Max Schmeling
1931: Tommy Loughran
1932: Jack Sharkey
1933: No Award
1934: Tony Canzoneri/Barney Ross
1935: Barney Ross
1936: Joe Louis
1937: Henry Armstrong
1938: Joe Louis
1939: Joe Louis
1940: Billy Conn
1941: Joe Louis
1942: Ray Robinson
1943: Fred Apostoli
1944: Beau Jack
1945: Willie Pep
1946: Tony Zale
1947: Gus Lesnevich
1948: Ike Williams
1949: Ezzard Charles
1950: Ezzard Charles
1951: Ray Robinson
1952: Rocky Marciano
1953: Bobo Olson
1954: Rocky Marciano
1955: Rocky Marciano
1956: Floyd Patterson
1957: Carmen Basilio
1958: Ingemar Johansson
1959: Ingemar Johansson
1960: Floyd Patterson
1961: Joe Brown
1962: Dick Tiger
1963: Cassius Clay
1964: Emile Griffith
1965: Dick Tiger
1966: No Award
1967: Joe Frazier
1968: Nino Benvenuti
1969: Jose Napoles
1970: Joe Frazier
1971: Joe Frazier
1972: Muhammad Ali/Carlos Monzon
1973: George Foreman
1974: Muhammad Ali
1975: Muhammad Ali
1976: George Foreman
1977: Carlos Zarate
1978: Muhammad Ali
1979: Ray Leonard
1980: Thomas Hearns
1981: RayLeonard/SalvadorSanchez
1982: Larry Holmes
1983: Marvin Hagler
1984: Thomas Hearns
1985: Marvin Hagler/Donald Curry
1986: Mike Tyson
1987: Evander Holyfield
1988: Mike Tyson
1989: Pernell Whitaker
1990: Julio Cesar Chavez
1991: James Toney
1992: Riddick Bowe
1993: Michael Carbajal
1994: Roy Jones
1995: Oscar De La Hoya
1996: Evander Holyfield
1997: Evander Holyfield
1998: Floyd Mayweather
1999: Paulie Ayala

Four-time Fighter of the Year Louis

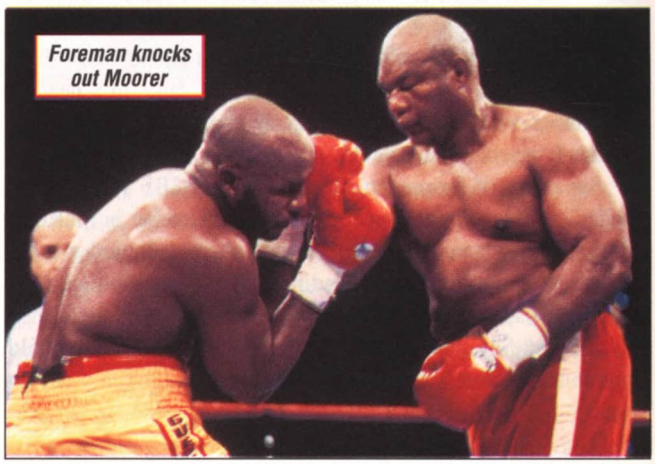
2000: Felix Trinidad
2001: Bernard Hopkins
2002: Vernon Forrest
2003: James Toney

FIGHT OF THE YEAR

1945: Rocky Graziano KO 10 Freddie Cochrane
1946: Tony Zale KO 6 Rocky Graziano
1947: Rocky Graziano KO 6 Tony Zale
1948: Marcel Cerdan KO 12 Tony Zale
1949: Willie Pep W 15 Sandy Saddler
1950: Jake LaMotta KO 15 Laurent Dauthuille
1951: Jersey Joe Walcott KO 7 Ezzard Charles
1952: Rocky Marciano KO 13 Jersey Joe Walcott
1953: Rocky Marciano KO 11 Roland LaStarza
1954: Rocky Marciano KO 8 Ezzard Charles
1955: Carmen Basilio KO 12 Tony DeMarco
1956: Carmen Basilio KO 9 Johnny Saxton
1957: Carmen Basilio W 15 Ray Robinson
1958: Ray Robinson W 15 Carmen Basilio
1959: Gene Fullmer KO 14 Carmen Basilio
1960: Floyd Patterson KO 5 Ingemar Johansson
1961: Joe Brown W 15 Dave Charnley
1962: Joey Giardello W 10 Henry Hank
1963: Cassius Clay W 10 Doug Jones
1964: Cassius Clay KO 7 Sonny Liston
1965: Floyd Patterson W 12 George Chuvalo
1966: Jose Torres W 15 Eddie Cotton
1967: Nino Benvenuti W 15 Emile Griffith
1968: Dick Tiger W 10 Frank DePaula
1969: Joe Frazier KO 7 Jerry Quarry
1970: Carlos Monzon KO 12 Nino Benvenuti

Chavez and Taylor make the best fight of '90

1971: Joe Frazier W 15 Muhammad Ali
1972: Bob Foster KO 14 Chris Finnegan
1973: George Foreman KO 2 Joe Frazier
1974: Muhammad Ali KO 8 George Foreman
1975: Muhammad Ali KO 14 Joe Frazier
1976: George Foreman KO 5 Ron Lyle
1977: Jimmy Young W 12 George Foreman
1978: Leon Spinks W 15 Muhammad Ali
1979: Danny Lopez KO 15 Mike Ayala
1980: Matthew Saad Muhammad KO 14 Yaqui Lopez
1981: Sugar Ray Leonard KO 14 Thomas Hearns
1982: Bobby Chacon W 15 Bazooka Limon
1983: Bobby Chacon W 12 Cornelius Boza-Edwards
1984: Jose Luis Ramirez KO 4 Edwin Rosario
1985: Marvin Hagler KO 3 Thomas Hearns
1986: Steve Cruz W 15 Barry McGuigan
1987: Sugar Ray Leonard W 12 Marvin Hagler
1988: Tony Lopez W 12 Rocky Lockridge
1989: Roberto Duran W 12 Iran Barkley
1990: Julio Cesar Chavez KO 12 Meldrick Taylor
1991: Robert Quiroga W 12 Akeem Anifowoshe
1992: Riddick Bowe W 12 Evander Holyfield
1993: Michael Carbajal KO 7 Chiquita Gonzalez
1994: Jorge Castro KO 9 John David Jackson
1995: Saman Sorjaturong KO 7 Chiquita Gonzalez
1996: Evander Holyfield KO 11 Mike Tyson
1997: Arturo Gatti KO 5 Gabriel Ruelas
1998: Ivan Robinson W 10 Arturo Gatti
1999: Paulie Ayala W 12 Johnny Tapia
2000: Erik Morales W 12 Marco Antonio Barrera
2001: Micky Ward W 10 Emanuel Burton
2002: Micky Ward W 10 Arturo Gatti
2003: Arturo Gatti W 10 Micky Ward


Foreman knocks out Moorer

Douglas stuns the world against Tyson

Duran comes back against Barkley in '89

ROUND OF THE YEAR

1945: Joyce-Williams, 12
1946: Zale-Graziano, 6
1947: Louis-Walcott, 4
1948: Louis-Walcott, 11
1949: Graziano-Fusari, 10
1950: LaMotta-Dauthuille, 15
1951: Marciano-Louis, 8
1952: Marciano-Walcott, 13
1953: Gavilan-Basilio, 2
1954: Moore-Johnson, 14
1955: Moore-Olson, 3
1956: Robinson-Olson, 4
1957: Robinson-Fullmer, 5
1958: Johansson-Machen, 1
1959: Johansson-Patterson, 3
1960: Patterson-Johansson, 5
1961: Patterson-Johansson, 1
1962: Liston-Patterson, 1
1963: Liston-Patterson, 1
1964: Torres-Olson, 1
1965: Torres-Pastrano, 6
1966: Ortiz-Ramos, 5
1967: Tiger-Rouse, 12
1968: Foster-Tiger, 4
1969: Benvenuti-Rodriguez, 11
1970: Ali-Bonavena, 15
1971: Frazier-Ali, 15
1972: Ali-Foster, 5
1973: Foreman-Frazier, 2
1974: Ali-Foreman, 8
1975: Ali-Frazier, 12
1976: Foreman-Lyle, 4 & 5
1977: Young-Foreman, 12
1978: Spinks-Ali, 15
1979: Franklin-Johnson, 8
1980: Saad Muhammad-Lopez, 8
1981: Lee-LoCicero, 5
1982: Gomez-Pintor, 3
1983: Holmes-Witherspoon, 9
1984: Meza-Garza, 1
1985: Hagler-Hearns, 1
1986: Cruz-McGuigan, 15
1987: Seabrooks-Jacob, 1
1988: Tyson-Spinks, 1
1989: Gutierrez-Franklin, 12
1990: Davis-Breland, 9
1991: No Award
1992: Bowe-Holyfield, 10
1993: Norris-Waters, 2
1994: Castro-Jackson, 9
1995: Sorjaturong-Gonzalez, 7
1996: Liles-Littles, 3
1997: Gatti-Ruelas, 5
1998: Robinson-Gatti II, 3
1999: De La Hoya-Quartey, 6
2000: Morales-Barrera, 5
2001: Hopkins-Trinidad, 10
2002: Ward-Gatti I, 9
2003: Freitas-Barrios, 11

KNOCKOUT OF THE YEAR

1989: Michael Nunn KO 1 Sumbu Kalambay
1990: Terry Norris KO 1 John Mugabi
1991: No Award
1992: Kennedy McKinney KO 11 Welcome Ncita
Morris East KO 11 Akinobu Hiranaka
1993: Gerald McClellan KO 5 Julian Jackson
1994: George Foreman KO 10 Michael Moorer
1995: Julio Cesar Vasquez KO 11 Carl Daniels
1996: Wilfredo Vasquez KO 11 Eloy Rojas
1997: Arturo Gatti KO 5 Gabriel Ruelas
1998: Roy Jones KO 4 Virgil Hill
1999: Derrick Jefferson KO 6 Maurice Harris
2000: Ben Tackie KO 10 Roberto Garcia
2001: Lennox Lewis KO 4 Hasim Rahman
2002: Lennox Lewis KO 8 Mike Tyson
2003: Rocky Juarez KO 10 Antonio Diaz

UPSET OF THE YEAR

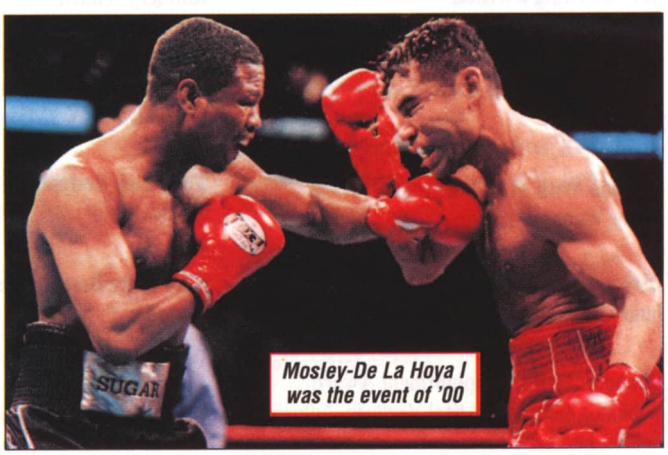
1980: Yasutsune Uehara KO 6 Sammy Serrano
1981: Roger Stafford W 10 Pipino Cuevas
1982: Kirkland Laing W 10 Roberto Duran
1983: Gerrie Coetzee KO 10 Michael Dokes
1984: Gene Hatcher KO 11 Johnny Bumphus
1985: Michael Spinks W 15 Larry Holmes
1986: Lloyd Honeyghan KO 6 Donald Curry
1987: Sugar Ray Leonard W 12 Marvin Hagler
1988: Iran Barkley KO 3 Thomas Hearns
1989: Rene Jacquot W 12 Donald Curry
1990: Buster Douglas KO 10 Mike Tyson
1991: No Award
1992: Azumah Nelson KO 8 Jeff Fenech
1993: Simon Brown KO 4 Terry Norris
1994: Vuyani Bungu W 12 Kennedy McKinney
1995: Willy Salazar KO 7 Danny Romero
1996: Evander Holyfield KO 11 Mike Tyson
1997: Vince Phillips KO 10 Kostya Tszyu
1998: Ivan Robinson W 10 Arturo Gatti
1999: Willy Wise W 10 Julio Cesar Chavez
2000: Jose Luis Castillo W 12 Steve Johnston
2001: Hasim Rahman KO 5 Lennox Lewis
2002: Juan Carlos Rubio W 10 Francisco Bojado
2003: Corrie Sanders KO 2 Wladimir Klitschko

COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

1980: Shoji Oguma
1981: Jimmy Young
1982: Bobby Chacon
1983: Roberto Duran
1984: Marvin Johnson
1985: Lupe Pintor
1986: Edwin Rosario
1987: Frankie Duarte
1988: Michael Dokes
1989: Roberto Duran
1990: Tony Lopez
1991: Vinny Pazienza
1992: Iran Barkley
1993: Zack Padilla
1994: George Foreman
1995: Azumah Nelson
1996: Danny Romero
1997: Vince Phillips
1998: Kostya Tszyu
1999: Michael Carbajal
2000: Virgil Hill
2001: John Michael Johnson
2002: Arturo Gatti
2003: James Toney

EVENT OF THE YEAR

1993: Fan Man at Holyfield-Bowe
1994: Revenge: The Rematches
1995: Tyson returns
1996: Riot at The Garden
1997: The bite
1998: Tyson's reinstatement
1999: The IBF indictments
2000: Mosley vs. De La Hoya
2001: Middleweight World Championship Series
2002: The Lewis-Tyson press conference brawl
2003: Roy Jones fights at heavyweight



Mosley-De La Hoya I was the event of '00

THE 25th ANNUAL HIGHLY UNOFFICIAL OFFICIAL AWARDS

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Roach had a huge year with Pacquiao and Toney

Manager Of The Year
Fernando Beltran

Trainer Of The Year
Freddie Roach

Female Fighter Of The Year
Laila Ali

Female Fight Of The Year
Ada Velez D 10 Lisa Brown

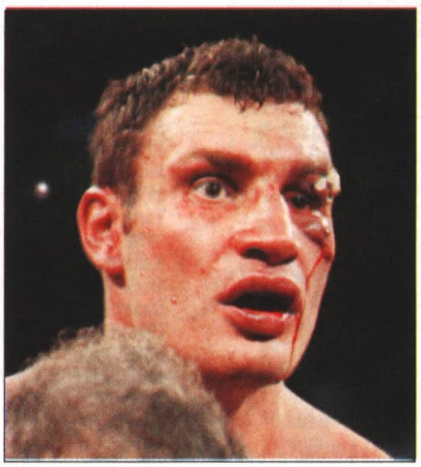
Most Exciting Division
Junior Lightweight

Most Boring Division
Middleweight

Division With Most Potential
Junior Welterweight

Division With Least Potential
Junior Featherweight

Duane Bobick Disappointment Award
Wladimir Klitschko, Angel Vazquez, Antwun Echols, Fernando Montiel



Klitschko showed guts (and blood) against Lewis

Count Dracula Bloodbath Crimson Band-Aid
Lennox Lewis KO 6 Vitali Klitschko
Julio Diaz KO 7 Ernesto Zepeda
Leonard Dorin D 12 Paul Spadafora
Carlos Hernandez Tech. Win 10 Steve Forbes
Francisco Bojado KO 6 William Adamyan

Future Champion Trophy
Rocky Juarez

Billy Graham-Joey Giardello Highway Robbery Award
Chris Byrd W 12 Fres Oquendo
Markus Beyer W 12 Eric Lucas
Sven Ottke W 12 Robin Reid
Kelvin Davis W 12 Louis Azille

Tony Zale Bodypuncher Memorial
Miguel Cotto

Eder Jofre Best-Fighter-You-Never-Saw Award
Lorenzo Parra

Henry Armstrong Windmill Imitation
Kassim Ouma

Rocky Balboa Gutsiest Effort Award
Arturo Gatti (vs. Micky Ward)
Micky Ward (vs. Arturo Gatti)
Vitali Klitschko (vs. Lennox Lewis)
Wayne McCullough (vs. Scott Harrison)
Scott Pemberton (vs. Omar Sheika)
Gary Balletto (vs. Goyo Vargas)
Michael Brodie (vs. In Jin Chi)
Chucky T (vs. Michael Stewart)
Emmanuel Clottey (vs. Muhammad Abdullaev)

Red Light-Green Light Crossroads Fight Of The Year
Juan Lazcano KO 11 Steve Johnston

The Comedy-On-TV Golden Giggles Award
The beer commercial in which Evander Holyfield knocks a wannabe pug's head off

Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom Featherfists Award
Cory Spinks

Should've-Stayed-In-The-Pasture Wall Calendar
Eddie Croft, Jo-El Scott, Lonnie Bradley

Muhammad Ali Time-To-Retire Pension Check
Evander Holyfield, Lou Savarese, Michael Grant, Tony Ayala, Antonio Diaz, James Crawford, Vince Phillips

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

It's time to get out, Mike

Tony Ayala Jr. Wasted Talent Trophy
Ricardo Williams

Thomas Dewey "Fading Down The Stretch" Award
Cedric Boswell (vs. Jameel McCline)

Buster Mathis Miniature Empty Refrigerator
Hector Camacho Jr.

Don't-Get-Up-To-Get-A-Beer Silver Mug
Rocky Juarez KO 1 David Murillo
Mike Tyson KO 1 Cliff Etienne
Kermit Cintron KO 1 Luis Rosado
Joe Mesi KO 1 Robert Davis
Joe Mesi KO 1 DaVarryl Williamson
Corrie Sanders KO 2 Wladimir Klitschko
Ricardo Mayorga KO 3 Vernon Forrest
Epifanio Mendoza KO 1 Ruben Williams

Howard Cosell "We Love Boxing" Trophy
Richard Hoffer, for the disgustingly biased anti-boxing piece he penned for the March 10, 2003, issue of *Sports Illustrated*

Ken Norton Media Good Guy Award
Antonio Tarver

Muhammad Ali "How To Lose With Class" Trophy
Evander Holyfield

Spit-Or-Get-Off-The-Pot Award
Joe Calzaghe, Corrie Sanders, Paulie Ayala

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Hakkar wasn't exactly in it to win it

Joe Bugner Just-Glad-To-Be-Here Trophy
Morrade Hakkar (vs. Bernard Hopkins)
Cliff Etienne (vs. Mike Tyson)
John Ruiz (vs. Roy Jones)
Emmanuel Lucero (vs. Manny Pacquiao)
Guty Espadas (vs. Erik Morales)
DeMarcus Corley (vs. Zab Judah)

Frightening-Amounts-Of-Blubber Whaling Harpoon
Hasim Rahman vs. David Tua

Archie Moore Ol'-Man-River Rocking Chair
Bernard Hopkins

Jake LaMotta Cast-Iron Chin Anvil
Felix Machado (vs. Luis Perez, both fights)
Ricardo Mayorga (vs. Vernon Forrest, both fights)
Wayne McCullough (vs. Scott Harrison)
Omar Sheika (vs. Scott Pemberton)

Most Improved Fighter Award
Jermain Taylor

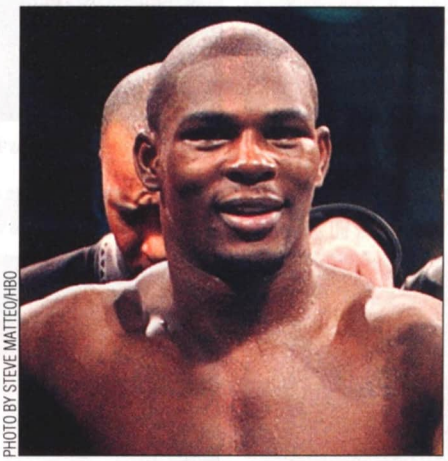


PHOTO BY STEVE MATTEO/HBO

Taylor improved dramatically in '03

Gene Tunney Distinguished Champion Award
Shane Mosley

Tap Tap Makathini Name Of The Year
Reda Zam-Zam

Azumah Nelson "Where'd He Come From?" Trophy
Luis Perez (W 12 Felix Machado)
Courtney Burton (KO 8 Angel Manfredy)
Jorge Barrios (KO by 12 Acelino Freitas)
Carlos Maussa (KO 6 Jeffrey Resto)
Mehdi Sahnoune (KO 7 Bruno Girard)
Edgar Cardenas (KO 10 Miguel Barrera)

TV Mismatches Of The Year
Bernard Hopkins KO 8 Morrade Hakkar (HBO)
Marco Antonio Barrera KO 4
Kevin Kelley (HBO PPV)
Oscar De La Hoya KO 7
Yory Boy Campas (HBO PPV)
Erik Morales KO 5
Bobby Boy Velardez (HBO PPV)
Audley Harrison KO 3 Brian Nix (ESPN2)
Kelson Pinto KO 2
Richard Savage (HBO Latino)
Acelino Freitas KO 4
Juan Carlos Ramirez (Showtime)
Manny Pacquiao KO 3 Emmanuel Lucero (HBO)
Fernando Vargas KO 7
Tony Marshall (Telefutura)
Zab Judah KO 1 Jaime Rangel (HBO PPV)

Never-In-A-Bad-Fight Purple Heart
Charles Brewer, Arturo Gatti, Leonard Dorin, Teddy Reid, Juan Diaz, Michael Brodie

Best Tiny Man In Elevator Shoes
Francisco Lorenzo

Rip-Off-The-Public Non-Effort Of The Year
Derrick Gainer (vs. Juan Manuel Marquez)
Kirk Johnson (vs. Vitali Klitschko)
Sherman Williams (vs. Tye Fields)

Steve Martin Arrow-Through-Head Ridiculous Gimmick
DeMarcus Corley, for both his revelation before his fight with Zab Judah that he wears women's underwear, and the bizarre Pharoah getup that he then wore into the ring

Mando Muniz "If At First You Don't Succeed" Persistence Award
Carlos Hernandez, Cory Spinks, Jesus Chavez, Silvio Branco, Juan Manuel Marquez, Daniel Reyes

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

In his third title try, Hernandez made good

Yogi Berra "It's Not Over Till It's Over" Resiliency Award
Emmanuel Clottey (KO 10 Muhammad Abdullaev)
Jameel McCline (KO 10 Cedric Boswell)
Acelino Freitas (KO 12 Jorge Barrios)
Manuel Gomez (KO 1 Jeffrey Hill)

Facial Monstrosity Of The Year Golden Enswell
William Joppy (vs. Bernard Hopkins)

Dave Tiberi Disappearing Fighter Award
Lou Del Valle, Andrew "Six Heads" Lewis, Eidy Moya

Emile Griffith "Steady If Unspectacular" Trophy
Fres Oquendo, Glencoffe Johnson, Winky Wright, Oktay Urkal

Gerry Cooney Proper Pigmentation Award
Vitali Klitschko

"BEST FIGHTER" POLL

A Survey Of The Experts

Fat guys, pencil-thin guys, and bald-headed guys with tattoos all gathered around a boxing ring, hoping to show off their prowess for a beauty queen in a scenic Hawaiian garden. Within seconds, the cast of the reality-TV show *Average Joe: Hawaii* turned their attention to the man entering the scene—Roy Jones.

For the next 10 minutes of the show, which aired in mid-January, Jones taught these ladies' men about boxing, then judged them as they paired up to spar. Eyes bulged as Jones showed off his skills for the Average Joes.

To boxing fans, and to those in the boxing media, Jones has long since proven he's no Average Joe. So it comes as no real surprise that Jones once again tops THE RING'S annual pound-for-pound best fighter poll.

In doing so, Jones extended his record for consecutive years of being named in the poll to 12. And with his second consecutive first-place finish, Jones was named best fighter in THE RING poll for a record sixth time.

Jones convinced pollsters in '03 that he was still the best by taking the step many had doubted he would—fighting a heavyweight. Jones' 12-round demolition of John Ruiz, in which he made Ruiz look like a true Average Joe, gave fans a glimpse of the Jones they always wanted to see. Then, Jones proved his toughness by dropping back down to light heavyweight and defending the world title in a hard-fought victory over Antonio Tarver.

Jones earned nine of a possible 10 first-place votes and accumulated 142 points, easily outdistancing Bernard Hopkins, who earned 114 points. Lightweight champion Floyd Mayweather made the biggest leap, moving from sixth place last year with 45 points, to third place this year with 97. While Vernon Forrest and Marco Antonio Barrera, who tied for third place last year, both fell out of the top 10, they were replaced by first-time entrant Manny Pacquiao and the comebacking James Toney, who made the cut for the first time since 1994.

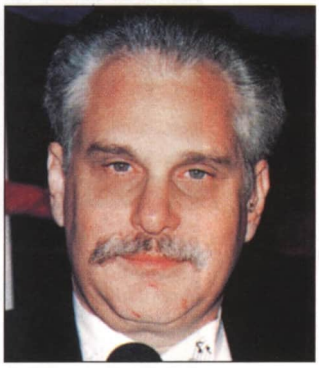
This year's panel of experts: *Showtime Championship Boxing* color analyst Al Bernstein, Philadelphia *Daily News* boxing writer Bernard Fernandez, ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* studio host Brian Kenny, lightweight contender Juan Lazcano, veteran trainer Al Mitchell, *Newark Star-Telegram* boxing writer Franklin McNeil, budding featherweight contender Rocky Juarez, *USA Today* boxing writer Dan Rafael, and former bantamweight titlist Wayne McCullough.

To compile the standings, we awarded points for each vote a fighter received: 15 points for a first place vote, 12 for a second-place vote, nine for a third-place vote, seven for a fourth-place vote, six for a fifth-place vote, five for a sixth-place vote, four for a seventh-place vote, three for an eighth-place vote, two for a ninth-place vote, and one for a 10th-place vote.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Roy Jones lands a right against Antonio Tarver

AL BERNSTEIN



1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Bernard Hopkins
3. James Toney
4. Roy Jones
5. Kostya Tszyu
6. Manny Pacquiao
7. Shane Mosley
8. Oscar De La Hoya
9. Erik Morales
10. Lennox Lewis

"Floyd Mayweather not only has extraordinary skills, he is at his peak physically. He can do anything in a boxing ring, and when properly focused is the best in the business. Beneath him is the ageless wonder, Bernard Hopkins. If only we saw him more often. Toney has reemerged in a big way, and Jones falls to fourth because of his bad performance against Tarver."

BERNARD FERNANDEZ

1. Roy Jones
2. Bernard Hopkins
3. Floyd Mayweather
4. James Toney
5. Shane Mosley
6. Manny Pacquiao
7. Oscar De La Hoya
8. Kostya Tszyu
9. Lennox Lewis
10. Joel Casamayor

"I generally resist the temptation to rank Jones number one, because of his cautious approach to selecting opponents, but by that rule of thumb, it's difficult to rate Hopkins ahead of him. They're still 1 and 1A, but Mayweather is moving up fast on the outside, and Toney, long thought to be in hibernation, has awakened with a vengeance. And my good impressions of Pacquiao appear to be more than justified."

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Bernard Hopkins batters William Joppy

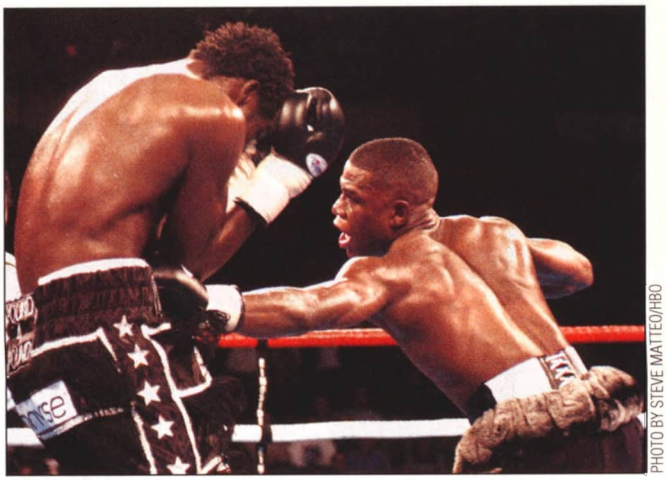
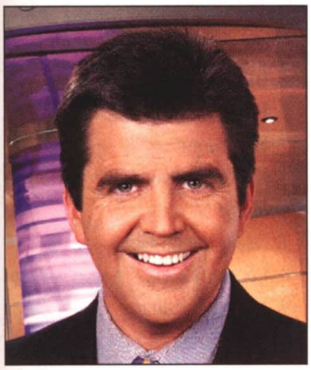


PHOTO BY STEVE MATTEO/HBO

Floyd Mayweather picks apart Phillip Ndou

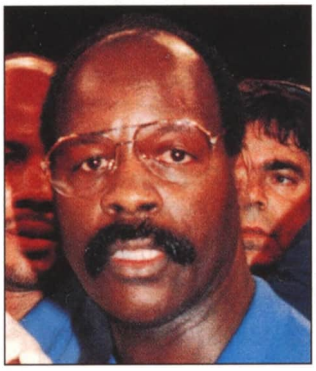
BRIAN KENNY



1. Roy Jones
2. Floyd Mayweather
3. Bernard Hopkins
4. Shane Mosley
5. Oscar De La Hoya
6. Kostya Tszyu
7. Vernon Forrest
8. Manny Pacquiao
9. James Toney
10. Zab Judah

"Difficult decisions. Jones is the standard, and Mayweather's dominance gives him a microscopic edge over Hopkins. If Mosley and De La Hoya are ranked high, where does that leave Vernon Forrest? Forrest's close decision loss to Ricardo Mayorga, which I scored in favor of Forrest, I believe puts him in the top 10, but not the top five."

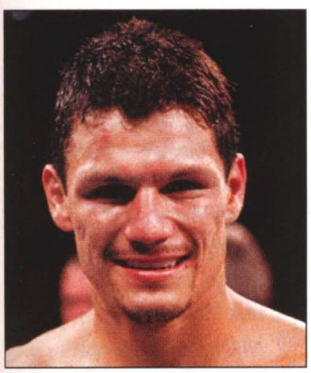
AL MITCHELL



1. Roy Jones
2. Bernard Hopkins
3. Floyd Mayweather
4. James Toney
5. Lennox Lewis
6. Erik Morales
7. Shane Mosley
8. Kostya Tszyu
9. Winky Wright
10. Manny Pacquiao

"Roy is an excellent heavyweight, who still boxes like a middleweight. Bernard Hopkins beats whoever is front of him. I like Floyd at three, because he reminds me a little bit of Pernell Whitaker. Winky Wright is one of the most avoided fighters in the world today. I would rank Vernon Forrest and Oscar De La Hoya, but I think the top 10 should be for champions."

JUAN LAZCANO



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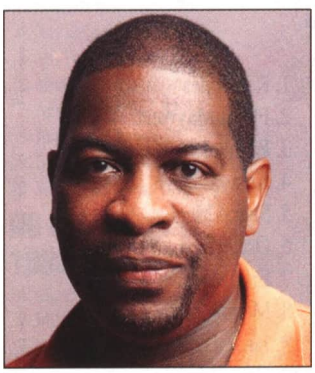
2. Bernard Hopkins
3. Floyd Mayweather
4. Oscar De La Hoya
5. Lennox Lewis
6. James Toney
7. Shane Mosley
8. Kostya Tszyu
9. Manny Pacquiao
10. Erik Morales

"You have to give Jones credit. He did step to the plate twice, going up 20, 25 pounds to fight and beat John Ruiz, and then he dropped 20, 25 pounds to fight Antonio Tarver. You have to respect him for doing that. Not many fighters in the world can do that. He hand-picked the heavyweight, but he still beat a legitimate heavyweight, and then came back down to beat a legitimate champion in Antonio Tarver. I put De La Hoya at four, because I thought he beat Mosley."

FRANKLIN McNEIL



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3. Floyd Mayweather
4. Manny Pacquiao
5. Shane Mosley
6. Erik Morales
7. Lennox Lewis
8. Oscar De La Hoya
9. Kostya Tszyu
10. James Toney

"Jones holds onto the top spot, but barely. Despite struggling against Antonio Tarver in November, his victory over John Ruiz is fresh enough to keep him ahead of Hopkins. Mayweather could secure the top spot if he wins a junior welterweight title. Pacquiao has been ignored long enough. His destruction of Marco Antonio Barrera in November earned him a top-five ranking. Morales could crack the top five sometime this year. Tszyu's days on this list could be numbered."

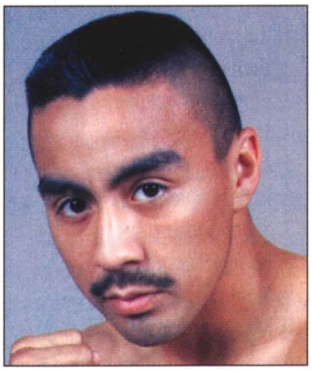
PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Shane Mosley exchanges with Oscar De La Hoya

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Kostya Tszyu nails Jesse James Leija with a right

ROCKY JUAREZ



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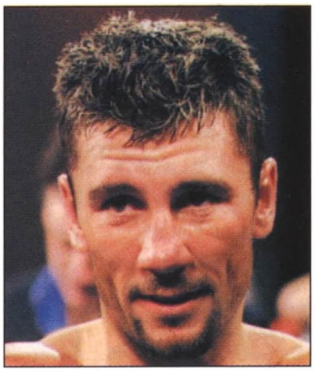
2. Bernard Hopkins
3. Kostya Tszyu
4. Floyd Mayweather
5. Oscar De La Hoya
6. Manny Pacquiao
7. Erik Morales
8. Marco Antonio Barrera
9. Shane Mosley
10. Acelino Freitas

"I believe Roy Jones has to be number one. The Antonio Tarver fight taught Roy Jones a lesson, because the weight factor bothered him and had him weak. But I still think Jones beat Tarver. I have Oscar higher than Mosley, because I felt Oscar beat Mosley the second time. Barrera had a bad night against Pacquiao, and that one fight shouldn't take him off the list."

WAYNE McCULLOUGH



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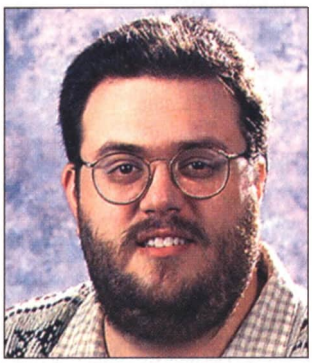
3. Floyd Mayweather
4. Erik Morales
5. Kostya Tszyu
6. Shane Mosley
7. Oscar De La Hoya
8. Lennox Lewis
9. Manny Pacquaio
10. Cory Spinks

"Roy Jones takes the number-one spot in my top 10 pound-for-pound list because he still stands out in a league of his own. Hopkins proved his worth by dominating Joppy. Mayweather has looked great moving through the divisions and is worthy of number three. Morales has also moved through several weight divisions and looked better and stronger as he did. Tszyu rounds out the top five as he holds onto his undisputed title."

DAN RAFAEL



1. Roy Jones
2. Floyd Mayweather
3. Bernard Hopkins
4. Kostya Tszyu
5. Shane Mosley
6. Oscar De La Hoya
7. Erik Morales
8. Manny Pacquiao
9. James Toney
10. Cory Spinks

"Jones has been number one for a long time, and he's done nothing to diminish his status. In my mind, the Tarver fight was testament to his greatness, because it came against a good opponent, and he proved what he can do in a tough fight. Mayweather is the heir apparent, and once Jones decides to retire, Mayweather is clearly the most talented fighter in the world. Hopkins could easily be number-two, he just needs to fight a higher caliber of opposition."

THE RING

1. Roy Jones
2. Bernard Hopkins
3. Shane Mosley
4. Oscar De La Hoya
5. Floyd Mayweather
6. Manny Pacquiao
7. Kostya Tszyu
8. Erik Morales
9. James Toney
10. Antonio Tarver

"Jones finally took a risk and moved to heavyweight in '03, and he beat Ruiz, a legitimate top-10 heavy, in such impressive and dominant fashion that it was nearly impossible at the time to rank anybody else number one. After he struggled with Tarver, however, and Hopkins then followed with his one-sided thumping of William Joppy, the top position became debatable again. But Jones had the stronger year overall, and edges "The Executioner" out."

THE RESULTS

1. Roy Jones—142 points
2. Bernard Hopkins—114
3. Floyd Mayweather—97
4. Shane Mosley—53
5. Kostya Tszyu—48
6. Oscar De La Hoya—45
7. Manny Pacquiao—38
8. James Toney—35
9. Erik Morales—31
10. Lennox Lewis—22

ALSO RECEIVING VOTES

Vernon Forrest—4
Marco Antonio Barrera—3
Cory Spinks—2
Winky Wright—2
Joel Casamayor—1
Acelino Freitas—1
Zab Judah—1
Antonio Tarver—1

2002 POLL

1. Roy Jones—135 points
2. Oscar De La Hoya—89
3. Marco Antonio Barrera—78 (tie)
3. Vernon Forrest—78 (tie)
3. Bernard Hopkins—78 (tie)
6. Floyd Mayweather—45
7. Lennox Lewis—43
8. Kostya Tszyu—42
9. Erik Morales—25
10. Shane Mosley—13

2001 POLL

1. Shane Mosley—132
2. Roy Jones—108
3. Bernard Hopkins—98
4. Floyd Mayweather—77
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—44
6. Oscar De La Hoya—40
7. Felix Trinidad—39
8. Kostya Tszyu—34
9. Lennox Lewis—23
10. Ricardo Lopez—22

2000 POLL

1. Felix Trinidad—126
2. Shane Mosley—123
3. Roy Jones—109
4. Oscar De La Hoya—43
5. Floyd Mayweather—39
6. Naseem Hamed—37
7. Ricardo Lopez—35
8. Diego Corrales—33
9. Bernard Hopkins—32
10. Lennox Lewis—31

1999 POLL

1. Roy Jones—150
2. Oscar De La Hoya—85
3. Floyd Mayweather—78
4. Shane Mosley—68 (tie)
4. Felix Trinidad—68 (tie)
6. Mark Johnson—47 (tie)
6. Ricardo Lopez—47 (tie)
8. Erik Morales—21
9. Bernard Hopkins—16
10. Fernando Vargas—15

1998 POLL

1. Roy Jones—141
2. Oscar De La Hoya—123
3. Felix Trinidad—67
4. Shane Mosley—65
5. Evander Holyfield—55
6. Mark Johnson—45
7. Naseem Hamed—33
8. Ricardo Lopez—23
9. Floyd Mayweather—19
10. Pernell Whitaker—14

1997 POLL

1. Oscar De La Hoya—123
2. Roy Jones—117
3. Ricardo Lopez—83
4. Evander Holyfield—80
5. Felix Trinidad—65
6. Pernell Whitaker—37
7. Naseem Hamed—28
8. Mark Johnson—22 (tie)
8. Junior Jones—22 (tie)
10. Johnny Tapia—18

1996 POLL

1. Roy Jones—123
2. Oscar De La Hoya—107
3. Pernell Whitaker—92
4. Evander Holyfield—64
5. Felix Trinidad—59
6. Ricardo Lopez—56
7. Terry Norris—28
8. Ike Quartey—21
9. Azumah Nelson—12
10. Yuri Arbachakov—11

1995 POLL

1. Roy Jones—138
2. Pernell Whitaker—126
3. Oscar De La Hoya—74
4. Felix Trinidad—59
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—48
6. Riddick Bowe—44
7. Ricardo Lopez—37
8. Julio Cesar Chavez—18
9. Ike Quartey—16
10. Naseem Hamed—12

1994 POLL

1. Pernell Whitaker—130
2. Roy Jones—129
3. Frankie Randall—53
4. Ricardo Lopez—45
5. Orlando Canizales—39
6. Chiquita Gonzalez—38
7. James Toney—36
8. Gerald McClellan—33
9. Felix Trinidad—29
10. Kevin Kelley—28

1993 POLL

1. Pernell Whitaker—147
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—86
3. Terry Norris—84
4. James Toney—76
5. Michael Carbajal—39
6. Evander Holyfield—36
7. Buddy McGirt—28
8. Roy Jones—23
9. Orlando Canizales—22
10. Ricardo Lopez—21

1992 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—136
2. Terry Norris—91
3. Pernell Whitaker—85
4. Buddy McGirt—60
5. Riddick Bowe—45
6. Orlando Canizales—36
7. Azumah Nelson—34
8. Lennox Lewis—24
9. Julian Jackson—18
10. Roy Jones—15 (tie)
10. Mike McCallum—15 (tie)

1991 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—138
2. Pernell Whitaker—100
3. Evander Holyfield—78
4. Mike Tyson—55
5. Meldrick Taylor—48
6. Mike McCallum—38
7. Thomas Hearns—34
8. Khaosai Galaxy—25
9. Terry Norris—22
10. Simon Brown—21

1990 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—123
2. Pernell Whitaker—104
3. Mike Tyson—71
4. Meldrick Taylor—57
5. Buster Douglas—51
6. Simon Brown—27
7. Antonio Esparragoza—25
8. Michael Nunn—23
9. Evander Holyfield—21
10. Humberto Gonzalez—14

1989 POLL

1. Mike Tyson—147
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—91
3. Meldrick Taylor—61
4. Michael Nunn—60
5. Evander Holyfield—56
6. Pernell Whitaker—46
7. Ray Leonard—28
8. Jeff Fenech—27
9. Azumah Nelson—18
10. Marlon Starling—16

1988 POLL

1. Mike Tyson—144
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—118
3. Evander Holyfield—66
4. Ray Leonard—55
5. Jeff Fenech—44
6. Michael Nunn—33
7. Azumah Nelson—32
8. Jung Koo Chang—23
9. Buddy McGirt—21
10. Sumbu Kalambay—18

NO POLL IN 1987

1986 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—138
2. Mike Tyson—92
3. Donald Curry—59
4. Thomas Hearns—52
5. Edwin Rosario—47
6. Azumah Nelson—45 (tie)
6. Michael Spinks—45 (tie)
8. Evander Holyfield—32
9. Julio Cesar Chavez—26
10. Hector Camacho—22

1985 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—150
2. Hector Camacho—86
3. Michael Spinks—85
4. Donald Curry—78
5. Thomas Hearns—42
6. Barry McGuigan—32
7. Milton McCrory—25
8. Julio Cesar Chavez—22 (tie)
8. Pinklon Thomas—22 (tie)
10. Larry Holmes—21

1984 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—112
2. Aaron Pryor—77
3. Larry Holmes—72
4. Eusebio Pedroza—66
5. Hector Camacho—50
6. Jeff Chandler—47 (tie)
6. Ray Leonard—47 (tie)
8. Michael Spinks—45
9. Thomas Hearns—34
10. Donald Curry—26

1983 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—147
2. Aaron Pryor—93
3. Larry Holmes—91
4. Michael Spinks—66
5. Jeff Chandler—57
6. Thomas Hearns—45
7. Alexis Arguello—29
8. Wilfredo Gomez—28
9. Hector Camacho—24
10. Eusebio Pedroza—12

1982 POLL

1. Ray Leonard—142
2. Alexis Arguello—97
3. Marvin Hagler—76
4. Salvador Sanchez—72
5. Wilfred Benitez—68
6. Larry Holmes—61
7. Jeff Chandler—25
8. Eusebio Pedroza—18
9. Aaron Pryor—17
10. Thomas Hearns—14 (tie)
10. Dwight Muhammad Qawi—14 (tie)

1981 POLL

1. Thomas Hearns—116
2. Ray Leonard—108
3. Marvin Hagler—76
4. Larry Holmes—75
5. Alexis Arguello—62
6. Wilfredo Gomez—58
7. Eddie Mustafa Muhammad—28
8. Matthew Saad Muhammad—24
9. Wilfred Benitez—18
10. Roberto Duran—13 (tie)
10. Aaron Pryor—13 (tie)

1980 POLL

1. Roberto Duran—96
2. Ray Leonard—93
3. Wilfredo Gomez—88
4. Danny Lopez—65
5. Pipino Cuevas—54
6. Alexis Arguello—40
7. Larry Holmes—32
8. Wilfred Benitez—26
9. Vito Antuofermo—25 (tie)
9. Matthew Saad Muhammad—25 (tie)

WHO WILL STAY

Five Men Who Will Keep Their Titles... Five Who Won't

By Mike Houser

Boxing was full of surprises in 2003. But while it was a great year of action for fans, it wasn't so kind to boxing's old guard. Marco Antonio Barrera had his head handed to him by Manny Pacquiao, Lennox Lewis barely escaped with the heavyweight championship after Vitali Klitschko proved a little too hard to swallow, and even Roy Jones looked human against Antonio Tarver.

Even though the unexpected can always throw a curve a guy's way (just ask Ricardo Mayorga, who got jinxed by Cory Spinks), it is the continued influence of the alphabet sanctioning bodies that will go a long way toward deciding who will keep their belts through 2004 and who will not.

It doesn't take a prophet to predict that the titleholders who choose to defend their straps against fighters the alphabet organizations consider worthy will probably keep them. Factor in lack of activity—two defenses a year has become the norm for many titlists—and there isn't as much prognosticating as you might expect.

The rest of the picture involves being able to play matchmaker and sniffing out the money matches, judging which fighters' styles match up well or poorly with others', and taking a scientific guess at the winners.

Sounds easy, doesn't it? Well, when 2005 rolls around we'll see if it was as easy as it appears to be.

The Five Who Will Stay

MANNY PACQUIAO

World Featherweight Champion

Pacquiao's one-sided thrashing of Marco Antonio Barrera not only earned him The Ring's world championship belt, it also spares us having to watch him defend it against a rogues gallery of alphabet mandatory contenders.

This year, look for the former IBF junior featherweight titlist to fight the best the featherweight division has to offer. While Barrera has enough credibility to come back and earn a rematch with Pac-Man, there's no reason to believe it will happen right away, if at all. But a match against junior featherweight champion Paulie Ayala is a distinct possibility, as is one with WBC 122-pound titleholder Oscar Larios, who has been making noise about moving up a division.

But there is another even more attractive and likely event, and it involves hard-punching, slick-boxing WBA/IBF featherweight titlist Juan Manuel Marquez, who, before the fighting Filipino bushwhacked Barrera, looked to be ready to challenge for featherweight supremacy.

True, Pacquiao has some liabilities: He is a blown-up flyweight, has a slightly built upper body, and likes his beer. But it's also true the southpaw slugger has a welterweight's legs, hits like a baseball bat, and never quits attacking.

Bottom line: Pacquiao is too fast and too strong for Ayala, Larios, and Marquez, and at the end of 2004 will remain what he is now—the most exciting champion in the sport today.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Can any featherweight withstand Pacquiao's fearsome attack?

& WHO WILL GO?

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Hopkins (pictured tagging William Joppy) just keeps rolling along

BERNARD HOPKINS

World Middleweight Champion

He may be 39 years old, but make no mistake about it: Hopkins has the middleweight division right where he wants it.

Yes, Hopkins lost out on millions of dollars by not handling his career more wisely after beating up Felix Trinidad in 2001, but guess what: If the rumors are true and Trinidad comes out of retirement, "The Executioner" is still in position to make more money than he ever has.

Hopkins, who has a division-record 17 title defenses, has several options from which to choose in 2004: He can face the likes of Robert Allen, Bert Schenk, and Howard Eastman and achieve his goal of 20 middleweight title defenses. Or if "Tito" chooses to return, Hopkins can garner a huge payday by giving him a rematch. If Trinidad stays retired or fights De La Hoya instead of Hopkins, 'Nard will be in a perfect position to fight the winner and cash his biggest check.

Moreover, Hopkins could face the winner of Shane Mosley-Winky Wright, which is scheduled for March 13.

In addition to his tremendous self-discipline and work ethic, Hopkins' greatest strength may be his patience. This will enable him to avoid an upset to his lesser competition while he waits for a big-money shot.

When all is said and done, look for the ageless wonder to keep his status as world champion for at least another year.

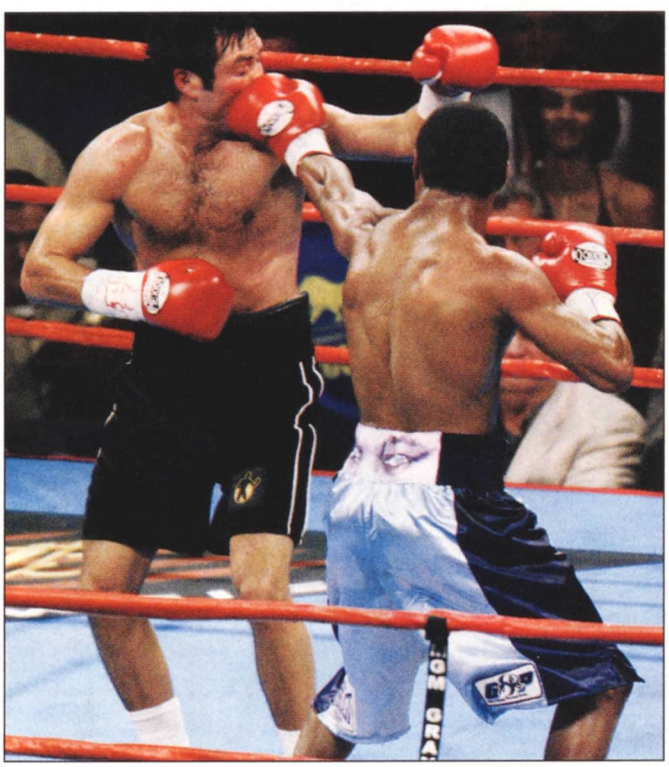
SHANE MOSLEY

World Junior Middleweight Champion

Point the dirty end of the stick at whomever you want, but the fact is that Mosley and De La Hoya priced their way out of a third match, at least for the time being. Be that as it may, credit Mosley for taking on dangerous IBF 154-pound beltholder Winky Wright.

Nobody has been calling out Wright, save Hopkins, and the southpaw should provide Mosley with plenty of competition. But Mosley has two advantages over Wright, both of which should help see him through against the Winkster. Mosley has a superior amateur background and more experience in big fights, having faced De La Hoya and Vernon Forrest twice each (even though Forrest defeated him both times).

Following his anticipated victory over Wright, and if Trinidad comes out of retirement to face De La Hoya instead of Hopkins, Mosley can kiss "The Golden Boy" and at least $10-million goodbye. So what's left?



Will Mosley keep the title he won from De La Hoya?

Fernando Vargas isn't as ferocious since he incurred a back injury and shows no sign whatsoever of wanting to challenge Sugar Shane. So unless Mosley jumps up to face Hopkins, he'll be stuck with the unappealing options of a third meeting with Forrest or a track meet with new world welterweight champion Cory Spinks.

Neither fight is likely to make Sugar look sweet, so after the Wright match, a frustrated Mosley will probably have to settle for an alphabet mandatory of two. But even if he's lucky enough to get De La Hoya back in the ring, Mosley will still be the 154-pound champion at the start of 2005.

JEAN-MARC MORMECK

WBA Cruiserweight Titleholder

This is as easy as elementary math. Four minus four equals zero, which is exactly how many competitive cruiserweight contenders Mormeck will face in 2004.

Of the other four top cruiserweights, James Toney has gone off to chase heavyweight glory, Vassiliy Jirov will be fighting for the IBF title Toney vacated, and O'Neil Bell will likely face WBC bauble-holder Wayne Braithwaite.

A decent boxer with good power, Mormeck can feast on what passes for contenders in the WBA's 200-pound rankings. The Frenchman fought only twice in 2002 and once in '03, and if he's happy with the status quo, he won't fight more than twice this year.

One defense could be a rematch with Virgil Hill, whom Mormeck stopped in nine rounds to take the title and would be heavily favored to beat again. After that, the pickings are even slimmer, so figure on Mormeck ending the year still owning the WBA title.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Mormeck will probably face more Alexander Gurov-type challengers in 2004

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Marquez didn't look great against Pastrana, but kept his title anyway

RAFAEL MARQUEZ

IBF Bantamweight Titleholder

In his two fights against Mark "Two Sharp" Johnson and his title-winning effort against Tim Austin, Marquez looked like a world-beater. He is without a doubt the hardest puncher in the bantamweight division and has even resembled his hero Marco Antonio Barrera from time to time by mixing in some classy boxing skills.

Still, in his last title defense, against blown-up junior flyweight Mauricio Pastrana, a listless Marquez looked like the same vulnerable fighter who was stopped by Genaro Garcia and Francisco Mateos earlier in his career.

Be that as it may, based on their track records of fighting at home, WBA beltholder Johnny Bredahl and WBC counterpart Veerapol Sahaprom will not step foot in the same ring as Marquez. Of the two, only Bredahl has fought in the United States, and that was as challenger to Paulie Ayala in 2000. As it is, both of the other alphabet titleholders can make more money for less risk fighting on their own turf.

Based on his outing against Pastrana, it's doubtful Marquez will give a shot to a revived and ready Cruz Carbajal, unless there's some compelling financial motive, which is doubtful considering the kind of tiny purses 118-pounders usually earn. And with Austin in trouble with the law, and Johnson safely ensconced at 115 pounds, it all boils down to Marquez hanging on to his belt for another year.

THE FIVE WHO WILL GO

LENNOX LEWIS

WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION

Lewis has backed himself into a corner. If the big Brit had retired after demolishing Mike Tyson in 2002, his legacy would be secure. But his tilt with Vitali Klitschko saw Lennox looking like a lummox, and his subsequent imitation of Greta Garbo (he wants to be alone) has cast a pall on any hopes of future generations remembering him kindly.

Lewis tried to let a tubby Kirk Johnson take care of his dirty work against Vitali, but when Johnson capitulated inside of two rounds, it left Lewis with two unenviable choices: 1) Retire and look like he didn't have the stomach for a rematch with Klitschko; 2) Come back for one last fight against the 6'8" Ukrainian, who many believe would've gotten to Lewis if the ringside doctor hadn't gotten to Klitschko first.

Another fight with the enigmatic and invisible Tyson is out of the question, and Roy Jones, who wants what's left of Iron Mike, won't be knocking on Lewis' door anytime soon. Therefore, Lewis' place in boxing history will hinge on how he deals with the Klitschko situation.

Any way you slice it, Lewis will retire either before or after giving a rematch to the hungry "Dr. Iron Fist." Win, lose, or retire, Lewis will be gone sometime during 2004.

Will Lewis give Klitschko a rematch or retire in 2004?

JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ

WBA/IBF FEATHERWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER

If he remotely resembled most of the other titleholders out there, Marquez' reign would be secure for several years. A very capable boxer and a lethal puncher, all the talented Mexican would have to do is fight twice a year against the sort of questionable contenders the alphabet groups generally favor.

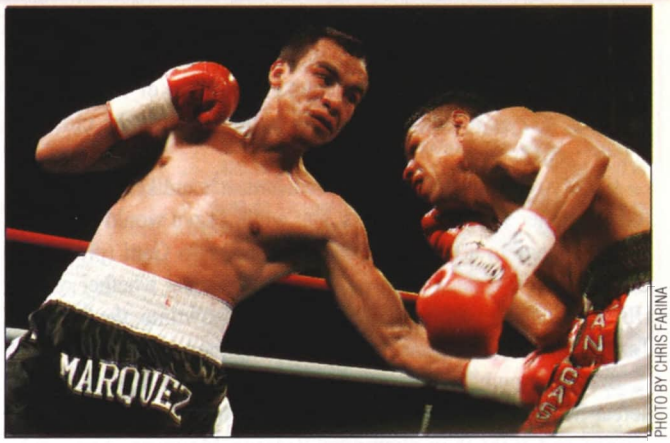


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Marquez goes low against Manuel Medina

But it's Marquez' very class and pride that will prove to be his undoing in '04. He wants to fight the best, and sometime during the year he will do so by challenging Filipino punching machine Manny Pacquiao.

It won't necessarily boil down to how Marquez deals with southpaws (he lost a sloppy fight to Freddie Norwood in 1999 and knocked out Manuel Medina last February). Instead, it will depend on how he responds to a nonstop, brawler-boxer like Pacquiao that will determine whether Marquez will remain a beltholder, or merely get belted. The bet here is the latter. In Barrera, Pacquiao destroyed a pound-for-pound fighter and a legend in the making. Marquez has yet to establish himself as either and figures to be devoured by Pac-Man.

KOSTYA TSZYU

WORLD JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT CHAMPION

Nobody can accuse Tszyu of taking the easy road to success. After an upset at the hands of Vince Phillips in 1997, Tszyu methodically beat every name fighter at 140 pounds to earn his status as legitimate world champion. Miguel Angel Gonzalez and Julio Cesar Chavez may have been past their primes, but Sharmba Mitchell and Zab Judah definitely were not.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Will Tszyu (pictured versus James Leija) move up to welterweight in '04?

By the time you read this, Tszyu will have once again looked to prove his mettle against Mitchell, whom he stopped in the seventh round of the pair's first encounter. But win or lose against Mitchell, Tszyu will not be the 140-pound king at the close of 2004.

If Tszyu defeats Mitchell as predicted, it's unlikely he'll give Judah another shot. Money talks, and while Tszyu would probably like to engage in a lucrative contest with Arturo Gatti (providing Gatti defeats Gianluca Branco), it's problematical whether or not HBO, which has Gatti under contract, and Showtime, the network Tszyu fights for, could make a deal to bring the two together.

Several months ago Tszyu told fightnews.com that should he defeat Mitchell a second time, he planned to move up to welterweight and fight then-champion Ricardo Mayorga. The wild-swinging Nicaraguan's loss to Cory Spinks ruined that plan, but a bout between Tszyu and the new champion is a possibility.

As far as Tszyu is concerned it's all about the money in '04, and the guess here is that he'll decide to say goodbye to the junior welterweight division and earn his final paydays in the 147-pound class.

ROY JONES

World Light Heavyweight Champion and WBA Heavyweight Titleholder

In a perfect world, Jones would not have been disqualified against Montell Griffin in 1997, and he'd be 50-0 today, having held portions of the middleweight, super middleweight, and heavyweight crowns, along with the undisputed light heavyweight title.

In a perfect world, Jones would give Antonio Tarver a rematch before tackling Tyson at heavyweight or Vassiliy Jirov at cruiserweight. Then Jones would close his career against either the winner of Lewis-Klitschko II and/or a rematch with Toney, whom he outpointed at 168 pounds in '94.

But this is boxing, not perfection, and there are three principles concerning Jones you must understand: He takes orders from nobody, is frequently a little too careful in selecting his opponents, and is looking to make mad loot before he retires.

While fighting "interim" WBA heavyweight titlist John Ruiz again falls into the safe category, there's not enough money involved and Jones has already been there and done that and will be stripped of his heavyweight belt. There's been some talk of a rematch with Tarver at a catch weight, but it's unlikely Jones will want to risk boiling down to 175 pounds again. Put it all together, and it's likely that Jones will no longer be wearing the WBA heavyweight strap or The Ring's light heavyweight belt at the end of '04.

JESUS CHAVEZ

WBC Super Featherweight Titleholder

Chavez is fun to watch. A nonstop bodypuncher, the crowd-pleasing Texan could easily keep the WBC belt if he decided to while away his time facing alphabet contenders such as Mzonke Fana and Randy Suico. But taking the easy route apparently isn't Chavez' style.

Instead, he elected to face powerpunching Erik Morales in a late-February bout that will be over by the time this issue hits the newsstands. Unless we've missed our guess, that will mean Chavez is already a former titleholder. For starters, the match pits a Mexican-American against a Mexican national. In such encounters, machismo usually leads to a head-to-head punchout. The fight will be entertaining while it lasts, but there's no way Chavez can match the classier Morales punch for punch, and a new WBC titleholder is practically a foregone conclusion. ■

Mike Houser is a boxing columnist for the Nevada Appeal and a frequent contributor to this magazine.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Jones barely held onto the light heavyweight crown against Tarver

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Chavez will find Morales much tougher than Carlos Gerena

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THE PUGILISTS WHO TRIED POLITICS

They Didn't All Have "Rocks In Their Heads"

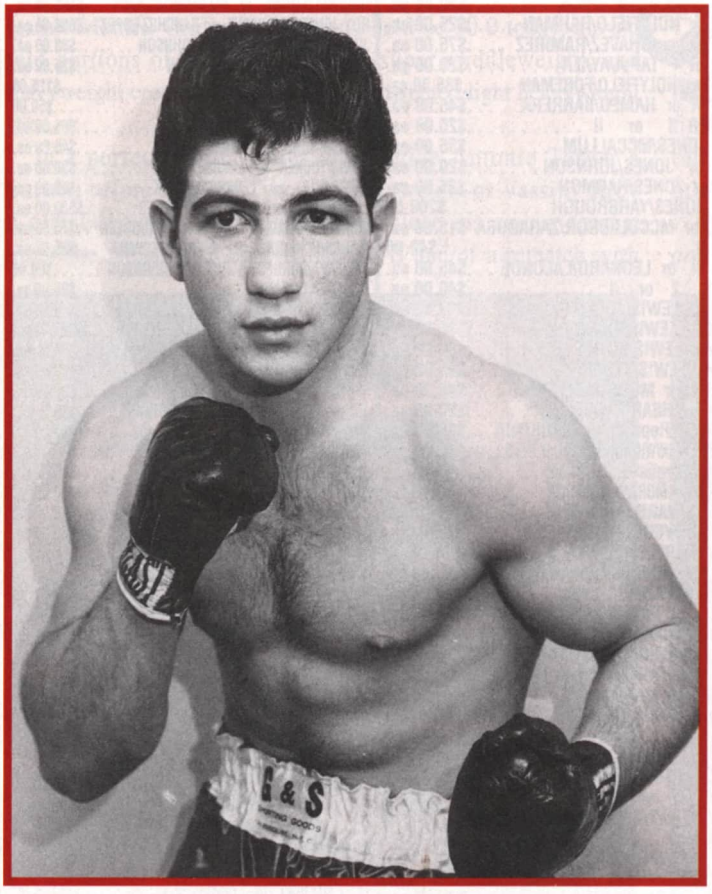
By Pete Ehrmann

Former pro basketball player Bill Bradley became a U.S. senator and ran for President. One-time college football star Gerald Ford actually made it to the White House. Baseball Hall of Famer Jim Bunning is currently a senator from Kentucky. And last October, California voters elected as governor a fellow who made his first public splash wearing posing briefs and baby oil.

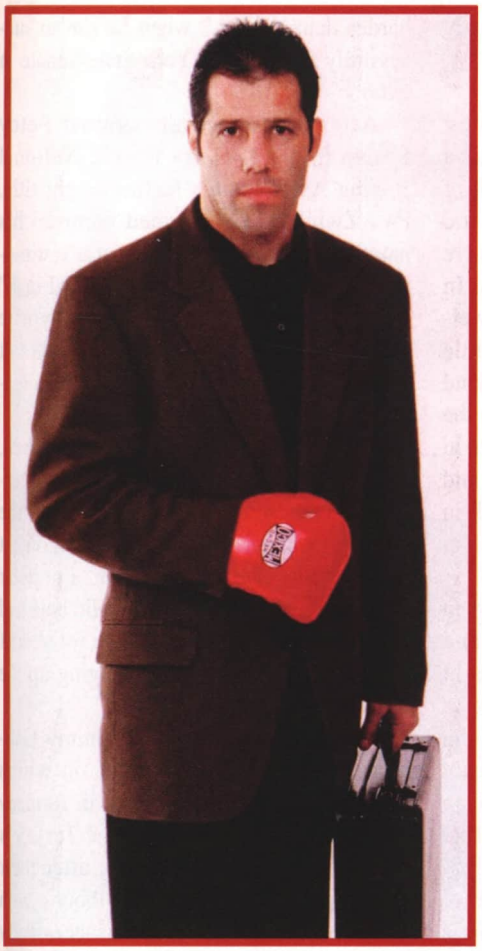
More than a few candidates for elective office used the fame they achieved in sports as a springboard into politics, and now and then there has even been a hat tossed into the political ring from the roped one in which, to paraphrase 1964 G.O.P. presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, extremism in defense is no vice (unless you're Chris Byrd), and moderation in pursuit of the other guy is no virtue.

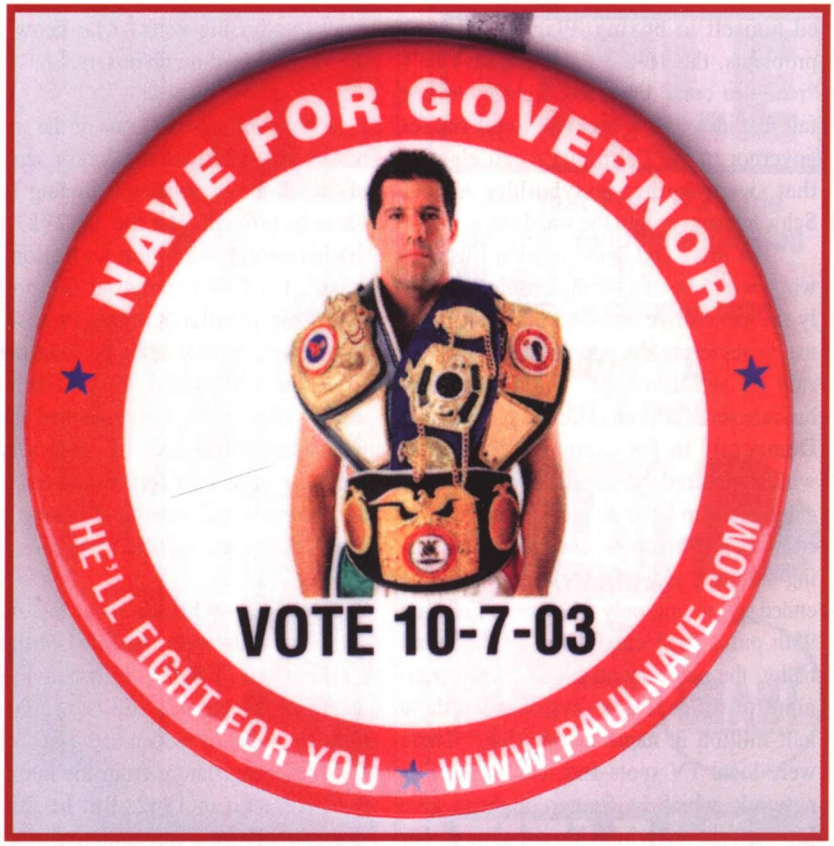
But candidates from other sports generally have an easier road than ex-boxers, mostly because getting hit in the head for a living isn't exactly considered boldface resume material, as A. Joseph DeNucci discovered 18 years ago in his first campaign for Massachusetts state auditor.

In the 1950s and '60s, Joe DeNucci



Joe DeNucci as he looked as a middleweight contender in the late-1950s (left) and as he appears today as Massachusetts state auditor (right), an elected post he's held since 1986. DeNucci says that his career as a boxer helped prepare him for public office.





Former pro Paul Nave (left), boxing glove on one hand, briefcase in the other, has run unsuccessfully for office several times in his home state of California. Most recently, he was among the 135 candidates in the 2003 gubernatorial recall election, but only received 612 votes despite his snazzy campaign button (right).

was a contender for the middleweight and light heavyweight titles. He had 73 pro bouts, going 54-15-4 (27), and had more fights in historic Boston Garden than any other boxer. His interest in politics went back to his amateur days, when DeNucci got a job as a capitol page.

After losing his first campaign for the state legislature by a mere three votes, DeNucci was elected to the state House of Representatives, served 10 years, and became the highly regarded chairman of the Joint Committee on Human Services and Elderly Affairs.

But when he made the leap into statewide politics in 1986, his Republican opponent for state auditor went for the kayo with a television commercial intimating that DeNucci was just a palooka in way over his head. It featured a clip of DeNucci telling a nettlesome reporter, "I must have rocks in my head for talking to you." But viewers just saw and heard the ex-fighter saying, "I must have rocks in my head … "

"If I had been an accountant or in some other profession," said DeNucci, "that would have been just a figure of speech." But because he had been a fighter, the implication was clear. DeNucci won anyway, and has been re-elected twice since, the last time with only token opposition.

Far from being ashamed or apologetic about his boxing career, DeNucci, now 64, looks back on it with pride. "I was a very good fighter, one of the best in the world," he said. "I fought some champions and beat them, but didn't get the decision. I made some mistakes and had a couple bad breaks, but they prepared me for my second life. I wouldn't be where I am today if I hadn't done what I did.

"I never apologize for being a fighter. It gave me a lot of what it takes to be good in this business. I found out about heartache and pain and a lot of other things you need to know about to be good in public service."

For all that, DeNucci concedes there is a downside, too.

"It helped me and hurt me," he said of his boxing past. "There were people who couldn't believe an ex-prize fighter without a college degree could run and be successful."

Although Paul Nave is now 0-2 as a candidate for public office, the 42-year-old says he's only begun to fight for a career in politics—and he doesn't rule out more fights in the ring, either. The resident of San Rafael, California, actually made his charter run for office (winning 9,000 votes in an unsuccessful bid for the State Assembly) at the same time he was training to fight Greg Haugen in 1999. Initially declared a draw, the result of that fight was changed to a no-contest after Haugen failed a drug test.

Winning a minor title from Haugen on March 27, 1998, was the high point of the boxing career that began when Nave was 16. But he's been politically active even longer than that. His father managed campaigns for several candidates for state and federal office, and when he was 10, Nave helped by delivering campaign literature door-to-door.

In 1990, Nave's aspirations in boxing and politics took a hit when he did three years at San Quentin prison for trafficking cocaine. He actually had a few fights while an inmate, and upon his release rededicat-

ed himself to boxing. Plagued by back problems, the 16-8-3 (7) Nave says he's "ready to come back and fight," but last fall that idea took a backseat to his run for governor in the California recall election that swept former bodybuilder Arnold Schwarzenegger into the statehouse.

"The drive and determination I used to win a world boxing championship is exactly the same drive and determination I will use to represent the people of California," said the self-described "world champion, businessman, civic activist, parent, and Democrat" in his campaign literature, which pictured Nave either wearing the championship belts he won in the ring, or carrying a briefcase in one hand and wearing a boxing glove on the other. While he ended up getting only 612 votes, finishing 95th out of 135 candidates on the recall ballot, the publicity he got as a boxer running for office, Nave says, was worth "a half-million in name recognition." There were local TV spots and one on the Fox network, which he figures ought to give him a leg up when he runs next for Congress or the state legislature.

A successful entrepreneur with his own pilot's license, the articulate Nave said he enjoys surprising voters who know "only the stereotype of dumb boxers."

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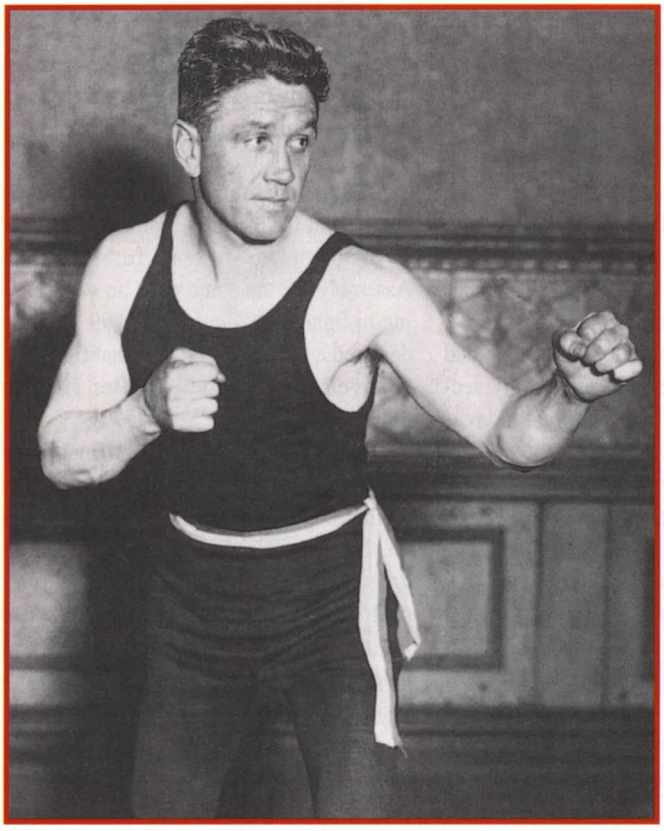
Johnny Kilbane was one of the smartest boxers of the early-20th century, and has a plaque in the International Boxing Hall of Fame to prove it. But the 1912-'23 world featherweight champion's election there wasn't his first triumph at the polls. In 1941, the popular Kilbane (whose welcome home parade after he won the title from Abe Attell was the biggest of its kind ever held in Cleveland) marched into the Ohio State Senate. Later, Kilbane served in the state House of Representatives, and then was elected municipal court clerk in Cleveland, a post he held up to his death in 1957.

Two Hall of Famers who fell short in political bids were Archie Moore and Carlos Ortiz. Former light heavyweight champion Moore was still campaigning as a heavyweight when he ran for the California legislature from his home base in San Diego in 1962. But he failed to make it past the Democratic primary. That was likewise the fate of the reigning 135-pound champion Ortiz, who said, "You've got to use your head in politics; that's harder than boxing," when he ran unsuccessfully for the New York State Senate in 1966.

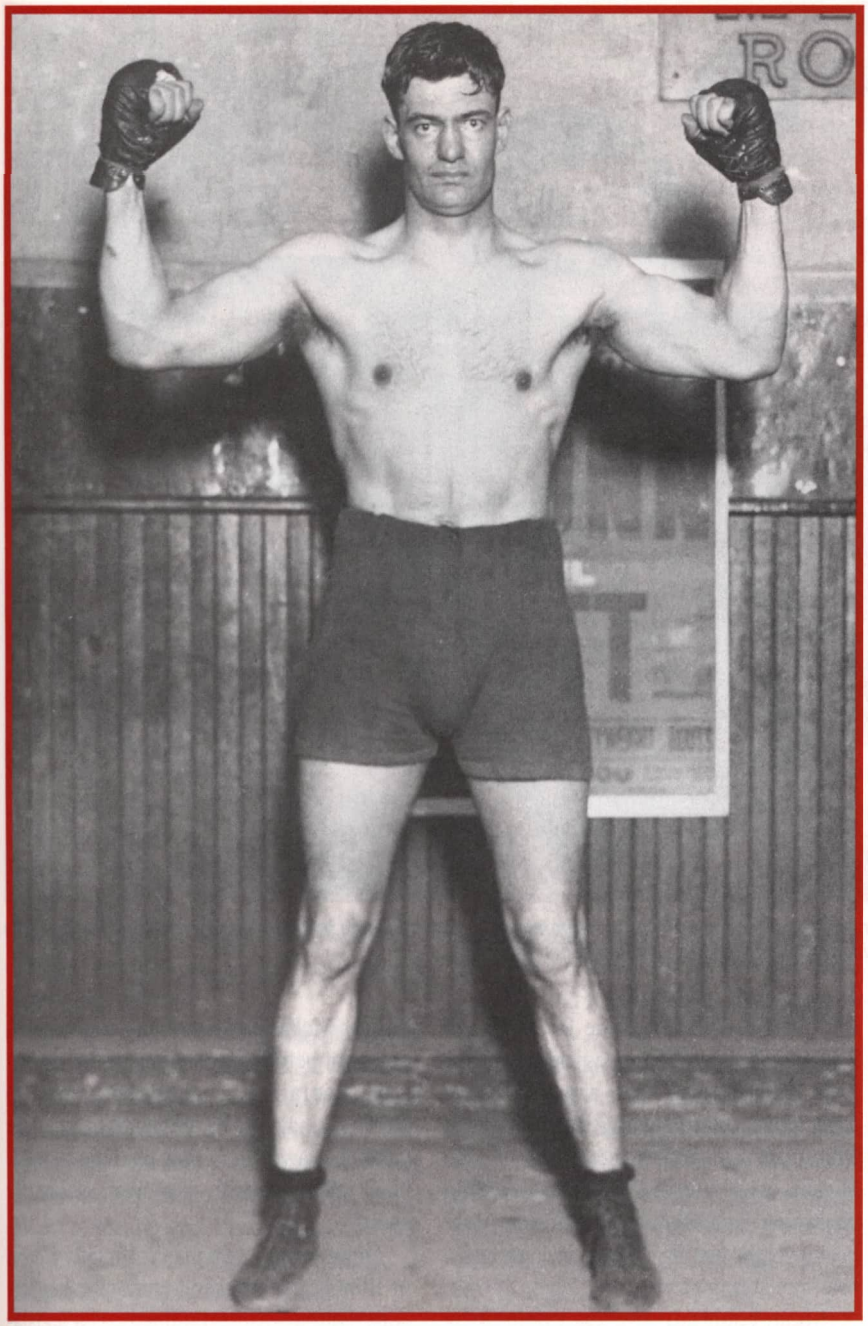
After he got a draw against Petey Scalzo in his 1941 try for the National Boxing Association's featherweight title, Phil Zwick was welcomed home to his native Kaukauna, Wisconsin, at a testimonial dinner where the "Wisconsin Flash" was hailed as one of the city's favorite sons. A few years later, guess who didn't make it through a four-man primary election for mayor.

Another Wisconsinite, Pinkey Mitchell, became the first recognized junior welterweight champion in 1922 by getting the most votes in a name-the-champion contest sponsored by *The Boxing Blade*, a popular publication for ring fans. But Mitchell had no clout at the polls when he ran for sheriff of Milwaukee County after hanging up the mitts.

Luckier than that were Tommy Gibbons and Jersey Joe Walcott, on whom voters pinned sheriff's badges in Ramsey County, Minnesota, and New Jersey's Camden County, respectively, after their fighting careers were over. Gibbons won his place in ring history by unsuccessfully



Following his reign as featherweight champion, Johnny Kilbane (left), was elected to the Ohio State Senate and later served as municipal court clerk of Cleveland (right), another elected office. In 1995, Kilbane was elected one last time—to the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

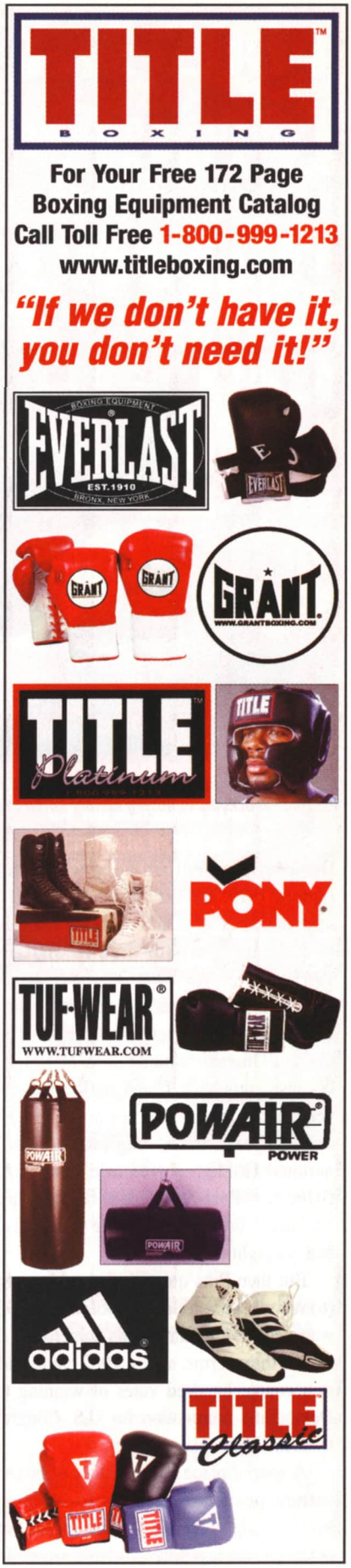


Former football star Monte Munn quit the Nebraska state legislature after one term to fight as a heavyweight, but after several kayo defeats he returned to politics and managed Herbert Hoover's 1928 presidential campaign in the Cornhusker state.

challenging Jack Dempsey for the heavyweight title in the infamous 1923 "Sack of Shelby" (Montana). Walcott, of course, won the heavyweight title from Ezzard Charles and was unhorsed by Rocky Marciano.

One-time collegiate boxing titlist Mills Lane was elected district attorney and judge in Washoe County, Nevada, in 1982 and '90, respectively, and getting it on as a high profile boxing referee at the same time never hurt him politically.

In 1910, the national amateur heavyweight title was won so impressively by W. Warren Barbour that he was immediately posited as a challenger for professional world champion Jack Johnson. "He has everything—youth, strength, speed, weight, power, and a punch—and I think he is a wonder," said former champion James J. Corbett. But Barbour's father had different ideas, and instead of wearing boxing gloves for a living, young Barbour went to work in the family's New Jersey linen thread company. He earned another footnote in ring history as timekeeper of the



Light heavyweight champion Archie Moore files for a two-month term as interim California state assemblyman in 1960. Two years later, the man with the most knockouts in boxing history failed in his bid to win a regular seat in the legislature.

Dempsey-Jess Willard heavyweight title fight in 1919, and distinguished himself in several terms as a U.S. senator from his home state. Barbour died in office in 1943.

After winning his first two bouts, Orville Pitts was kicked out of the 1946 Golden Gloves tournament in Milwaukee because somebody found out he was two years under the 16-year age limit. Over the next 12 years, the boxing prodigy won a national Golden Gloves title, the NCAA title, the Pan-American Games, and became a contender for the world light heavyweight title.

But then Pitts quit the ring with an 8-2 (6) record, went to law school, and in 1968 was elected alderman in his hometown. He served three terms, and in 1982 came within a couple hundred votes of winning the Democratic nomination for U.S. Congress from his Milwaukee district.

A special place in the history of boxers-turned-politicos belongs to long-ago heavyweight contender Monte Munn, who actually was a politico-turned-boxer. The 6'2", 200-pound star of the University of Nebraska football team was elected to the state legislature in 1925 and served one term. Then, after dabbling in pro football, Munn put himself in the hands of Dan Hickey, who'd turned Olympic wrestling champion Paul Berlenbach into the light heavyweight boxing champion, and had a brief run at ring glory.

Munn could hit, but kayo defeats by Knute Hansen, Phil Scott, and George Godfrey sent him back to the relatively safer world of politics as manager of Herbert Hoover's 1928 presidential campaign in Nebraska. Then Munn—whose brother, Wayne "Big" Munn, became world heavyweight wrestling champion, but was knocked out in his only match with gloves on—moved to Indiana, ran unsuccessfully for the State Senate, and died in 1932.

In 1913, Illinois had a state representative named George C. Hilton who also did some amateur boxing. Hilton not only sponsored a bill to legalize boxing in his state, but also challenged lightweight great Packey McFarland to a four-round exhibition bout before both houses of the legislature, declaring himself "prepared to receive a majority of the punches if he can convince lawmakers that boxing, as regulated under the bill, is a clean, scientific sport."

Since boxing remained officially illegal in Illinois for another decade-plus, apparently Hilton wasn't too handy as a legislator or a fighter.

No boxer has ever run for President of the United States, but Theodore Roosevelt should forever hold a special place in the hearts of his fellow fight fans for launching one of his runs for the White House with the ringing declaration, "My hat's in the ring. The fight is on, and I'm stripped to the buff!" During their later White House tenancies, Presidents Harding, Kennedy, and Clinton frequently stripped to the buff. But that's a story for a whole different kind of magazine. ■

Pete Ehrmann is a freelance writer based in West Allis, Wisconsin, and a regular contributor to this magazine.

New Face

(Continued from page 26)

round. Lock received a technical knockout loss—and 16 stitches to close the cut. He still bears a small scar today over the eye as a reminder of that night.

Lock grew so dismayed by the experience that he thought seriously about giving up on the sport. He had a 124-14 amateur record, including a victory over Rocky Juarez for the 119-pound title at the 1997 U.S. Championships. When Lock failed to make the U.S. Olympic Trials in 2000, he decided to turn pro.

His pro career, however, appeared brief after his ignominious pro debut. Lock underwent a two-year period in which he didn't fight at all. He had bills to pay, and real responsibilities, living with his fiancee, Ebony, and supporting their baby daughter. One fight, and everything Lock had hoped to achieve was suddenly wiped away.

"I was very pissed off and had serious doubts about ever fighting again," Lock recalled. "This happened in my professional debut. I was really upset."

During that time, Lock was off-and-on in the gym, and in the meantime, he got the job putting tires on cars.

"I was working 10 hours a day, six days a week at hard labor," Lock said. "I was thinking in the back of my mind that I had to keep training, that I still had to go to the gym. But I didn't have the kind of confidence I needed to continue my career. That first fight took a lot out of me, because I had dreams of doing big things. It was tough getting fights in Detroit, or anywhere, for that matter."

So he'd cold-call promoters and managers. He'd work on leads as to who was looking for fighters, though being an African-American junior featherweight made getting fights that much more difficult, since, in the lighter weight classes, it's the Latino fighters who tend to attract fans.

He thought about getting an ice cream truck and starting his own business. He thought about going to school and learning a trade. But it was hard to really do anything, living on a treadmill of waking up six mornings a week at 6 and not getting home until 6:30 p.m.

"I knew I had to get myself out of there," Lock said. "I kept trying to contact people. I tried contacting big-time promoters and they never called me back. A lot of guys didn't want to deal with guys in the lighter weight classes. Every time I would call people and not get a return call, it was like a slap in the face. I knew, when I didn't make the Olympic team, I'd have to work my way up from the bottom. I just didn't want to give up. If I gave up, I didn't want to wonder when I got older what would have happened. I was lucky to have Ebony and my family supporting me."

Then Lock got in touch with Roger Mayweather, the two-division former titlist and trainer of world lightweight champion Floyd Mayweather, his nephew. Roger wanted Lock to come to Las Vegas so he could see what type of skills the young fighter had.

"Roger saw Cornelius and gave me a call, telling me, 'You have a good kid here,'" recalled Tony Burrell, vice president of Guilty Boxing Promotions, which signed Lock to a promotional contract. "We knew Cornelius was close to giving up boxing. But his heart was still there. The kid still had determination, and too much skill to know he couldn't give it up."

Brad Goodman, a matchmaker for the Orleans Casino in Las Vegas, also liked what he saw of Lock. Goodman was impressed by Lock's sound fundamentals, and by his overall ability.

"What I like about Cornelius is that he's good in every area," Goodman said. "The only thing that worries me at times about him is that he doesn't use his boxing skills to full advantage. A lot of times he forgets his boxing ability and he tries to go and knock guys out. But I personally think he's championship material."

As does Roger Mayweather, who now trains Lock. Mayweather already feels Lock is one of the better junior featherweights in the world today. Mayweather likes Lock's tremendous hand speed, and though Lock is not the hardest puncher, Mayweather points out, he is accurate.

"He's hurting people now, but that comes from speed," Mayweather said. "Cornelius could be a world champion. The only thing I don't like is the scar tissue over his right eye. That's the only thing that can prevent him from being a champion. But he's the kind of kid you want to work with."

Unless it involves getting up at six in the morning in the frigid cold to put on car tires. ■

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Wladimir Klitschko KO 4 Danell Nicholson
Joe Mesi W 10 Monte Barrett
Audley Harrison KO 3 Brian Nix
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Jermell Barnes W 12 Robert Daniels
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PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

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The RING

FIGHTER of the MONTH

The plan was completely laid out. Everything was in place. Shane Mosley and Ricardo Mayorga were going to fight on March 13 at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas, HBO Pay-Per-View was going to carry it, and everybody involved was going to score big financially. Only one person could stand in the way of this perfect plan: Cory Spinks.

Mayorga didn't have to fight Spinks on December 13, but he chose to anyway, probably figuring he'd have an easy time with the St. Louis southpaw. To him, it wasn't really a risk. Who had Spinks beaten, after all? Michele Piccirillo? Mayorga saw it as an easy way to pick up another alphabet belt, and to be honest, most of the boxing world saw it that way, too. Spinks just wasn't going to have the firepower to hold Mayorga off, at least according to conventional wisdom.

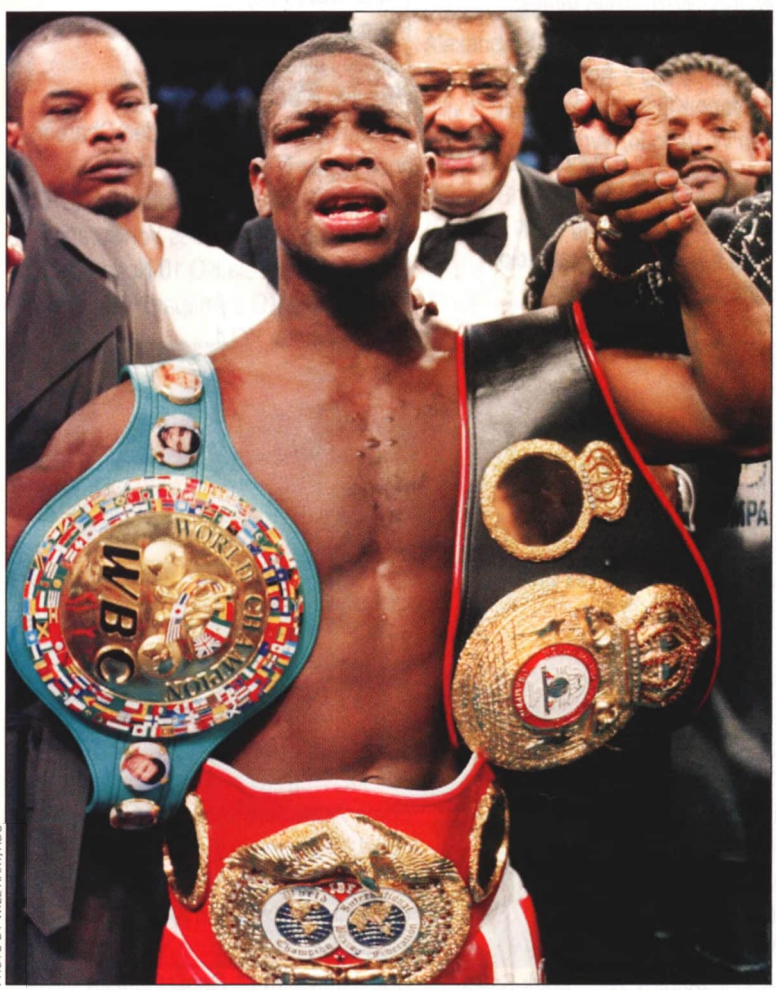

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

But Spinks didn't need firepower. He instead frustrated Mayorga with slick defense and an uncooperative game plan, and landed just enough of his speedy punches to win rounds. Spinks never got caught like we thought he would, didn't crumble under the weight of Mayorga's heavy blows. He was just gutsy enough without ever getting too gutsy for his own good, and when the scorecards were added up, the Spinks Jinx had struck yet again. Mosley-Mayorga was foiled. And Cory Spinks was the undisputed welterweight champion of the world.

• • • •

Cory Spinks

RINGSIDE REPORTS

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Freitas rocks outgunned Grigorian with a right

Acelino Freitas W 12 Artur Grigorian

Ledyard, Connecticut: The son of a former lottery ticket salesman, Freitas believes he is holding the winning numbers. With tremendous speed and startling two-fisted power, the Brazilian now just needs to take on a dangerous opponent and see if he can cash in.

For Freitas, January 3 was a night of beginnings. In nailing down a convincing 12-round decision over the aging Grigorian, not only did Freitas ring in a new year successfully, he also made his lightweight debut (moving up from 130 pounds), dominating the previously unbeaten Germany-based Uzbek with superior athleticism. For the fourth time in a row since his close win over Joel Casamayor, Freitas, 135, took on a heavy underdog, but at least this time, unlike in his previous bout against unheralded Jorge Barrios, "Popo" was in control throughout.

While Freitas' Brazilian supporters decked the Foxwoods Casino halls with green and yellow, the outmatched Grigorian, 134, was soon introduced to black and blue. Freitas pleased the partisan crowd with his increasingly awkward, in-and-out style, chalking up seven of the first eight rounds on all three scorecards. He also introduced the featherfisted Grigorian, 36, to the canvas four times throughout the bout, although the knockdowns in rounds six, seven, and eight all looked like pushes to everyone but referee Eddie Cotton (USA). Only the fourth-round knockdown, from a left uppercut-right cross combination, was legit. In what seemed like a makeup call, Cotton later penalized Freitas for a low blow in round 10.

For Grigorian, 36-1 (22), surviving the wrath of one of the sport's deadliest punchers was a moral victory of sorts. However, the bad news was delivered shortly after the final bell. The unanimous call (Clark Sammartino scored it 119-108, while Melvina Lathan and Don O'Neill both saw it 116-107; THE RING had it 117-106) was announced to the delight of those draped in yellow and green.

And by the time these fans finally stopped beating their drums in the wee Connecticut hours, it was the victorious Freitas, 35-0 (31), who was proudly beating his chest.

Promoter: Banner Promotions
Television: Showtime
(1-3-04)
Ted Bodenrader

Kassim Ouma KO 10 J.C. Candelo

Ledyard, Connecticut: We may have left it up to Uma Thurman to kill Bill, but when it came time to take out Candelo in January, the task belonged solely to the world's other Ouma. Although this Ouma is not nearly as pretty as our fictional heroine, the 24-year-old junior middleweight assassin was every bit as deadly when whacking out Candelo, 29, in the first shoot-'em-up thrill ride of the year.

In doing so, Ouma, 151, added new targets to his hit list, as the victory put him in line for a shot at the Shane Mosley-Winky Wright winner. However, Ouma, West Palm Beach, Florida, via Uganda, never looked past the assignment at hand.

If Candelo, 154, Denver, Colorado, via Colombia, had a shining moment in the bout, it came shortly after he and Ouma touched them up at the center of the Fox Theater ring. The first round was certainly Candelo's best, as he was able to keep a stiff jab in Ouma's face, and then catch his stalking nemesis with swift combinations on the outside. Ouma, however, responded with right-lefts out of his southpaw stance, and quickly seized control of the fight.

Over the next seven rounds, Candelo landed occasionally with winging shots to Ouma's skull, providing enough drama to keep an otherwise one-sided affair interesting. But it was the busy Ouma who was always in charge, landing the harder, more effective blows on the inside, scoring to both the body and head with sharp precision.

The effect of these barrages was cumulative, and the agony began to show on Candelo's weary face in the middle rounds. Rather than settle for a decision win, Ouma excited the sellout crowd with an explosive ending.

While Candelo charged out for the ninth round with a fresh vigor, it was quickly dispelled by the stronger Ouma, who maintained a sturdy foothold and repeatedly popped his opponent with a

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Ouma impressively finishes off Candelo

hard jab. As soon as Candelo provided him with an opening, Ouma took full advantage, crashing home a straight left, followed by a winging right. The combination put Candelo on the deck and ejected the rowdy spectators from their seats.

The bell quickly intervened, but it only prolonged the inevitable. It took only 15 seconds of the 10th round for Ouma, 19-1-1 (13), to finish the job, as he pounded Candelo, 26-6-3 (18), along the ropes, prompting referee Michael Ortega (USA) to wisely halt the bout.

Promoter: Banner Promotions
Television: Showtime
(1-3-04)
Ted Bodenrader

Lorenzo Parra W 12 Eric Morel

Bayamon, Puerto Rico: In one of the biggest upsets of 2003 and of recent flyweight history, unknown Venezuelan Parra, 111¾, shocked the division's top dog, 1996 Olympian Morel, 112, scoring a third-round knockdown that keyed a unanimous decision victory by scores of 116-111 (twice) and 115-112. After making five successful defenses of the WBA 112-pound title, Morel's perfect record is no more, and the 25-year-old Parra now holds the alphabet belt and a top-two ranking from THE RING.

Fighting in front of a pro-Morel crowd at Ruben Rodriguez Coliseum (though based in Madison, Wisconsin, Morel is originally from Puerto Rico), Parra got off to a good start, using his speed and slick movement to edge the first two rounds. Morel, 28, grew more aggressive in the third, but he left himself more open than usual defensively, and paid when Parra sent him down for the first time in his pro career with a looping right hand.

"It was a clean knockdown," Morel acknowledged after the fight. "It landed high on the head."

And it made the hole that "Little Hands Of Steel" had to climb out of rather deep. Parra continued to do well in the fourth, but Morel started to cut off the ring in round five, and enjoyed his best success in the sixth and seventh, when he rocked Parra solidly enough to make the challenger hold on a couple of occasions.

Parra remained mostly defensive in the eighth and ninth rounds, and in the 10th, Morel connected with an effective, long right hand. That seemed to jolt the Venezuelan back to life, though, and he responded with flurries of jabs and combinations, and kept the momentum going through the 11th. In the 12th, Morel, 33-1 (18), was the man going forward, but Parra, 22-0 (17), landed the better, cleaner punches to wrap up the decision.

Television: Pay-Per-View
Promoter: Top Rank
(12-6-03)

Vitali Klitschko KO 2 Kirk Johnson

New York, New York: Let's hope Klitschko gave Johnson a very expensive Christmas present, because nobody did more to advance the Ukrainian's career in 2003 than the flabby Canadian.

First, Johnson pulled out of a scheduled bout with heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis in June, which gave Klitschko an opportunity to step in as a late sub. He performed surprisingly well until a ghastly eye cut forced an unsatisfactory ending to a fight in which Klitschko was leading on the scorecards. Then Johnson showed up for his match with Klitschko at Madison Square Garden weighing 260 pounds, the highest of his pro career.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Klitschko hammers hapless Johnson with a hook

The 31-year-old Johnson, obviously knowing he wasn't in condition to go 12 hard rounds, came out winging wild shots at the sound of the opening bell, but accomplished little. The 6'7" Klitschko, a hard-looking 250, was unruffled under fire, and poked home a few straight blows before the round was over.

In the second, Dr. Klitschko, 32, marched forward in that robotic way of his, scoring effectively. Late in the round, he pinned the rapidly fading Johnson on the ropes and hammered him down with a series of solid but hardly devastating punches. Johnson beat the count of referee Arthur Mercante Jr. (USA), but was soon on the floor again after absorbing two more rights to the head. At that point, Mercante called it off 2:45 into the round, which set off a joyous celebration by the many flag-waving Ukrainians among the crowd of 10,823.

"I was 100 percent ready and motivated for this fight," said Klitschko, 33-2 (32). "This fight was my dream situation, coming to fight in Madison Square Garden and also to remain the number-one contender."

Johnson, 34-2-1 (25), seemed in denial afterward.

"The weight didn't affect my ability at all," he claimed. "I had a sluggish night against a guy you can't afford to have sluggish night against."

How sluggish was he? Well, according to CompuBox, in the slightly less than two rounds the bout lasted, Johnson landed only nine punches, compared to 55 for Klitschko.

Television: HBO
Promoter: Duva Boxing
(12-6-03)

Joe Mesi W 10 Monte Barrett

New York, New York: Mesi's Big Apple debut turned out to be somewhat of a mixed bag. The popular prospect from Tonawanda, New York, escaped Manhattan with his unbeaten record intact after 10 give-and-take rounds with a solid opponent, but took a thumping down the stretch when Barrett rallied to make it uncomfortably close.

Mesi, 237½, got off to a brisk start, landing clean rights to Barrett's head in the first and second rounds. One particularly good right in the second seemed to buzz Barrett, 215, but he stayed on his feet and recovered quickly.

Mesi, 30, continued to walk through Barrett's punches in the third and fourth, dishing out punishment as he waded in.

The 32-year-old Barrett, who suffered a cut over his left eye in the third, was blasted across the ring and into the ropes by a booming right to the head in the fifth. Referee Mike Ortega (USA) correctly ruled that it was a knockdown, as Barrett would definitely have hit the deck if the ropes hadn't held him up.

After the mandatory eight-count, Barrett, Queens, New York, did a very savvy thing. He switched to a southpaw stance, confusing his antagonist and effectively shutting down Mesi's attempt to finish him.

The sixth was kind of slow compared to the five rounds that had preceded it, but Mesi broke through with a series of rights late in the session. It was the last round he would win on THE RING's scorecard.

In the seventh, Barrett caught his charging adversary on the way in with a short and sweet left hook to the jaw, and Mesi crashed to the canvas for the first knockdown of his pro career. He beat the count, survived Barrett's followup barrage, and much to the delight of the Madison Square Garden crowd, fought back as the round drew to a close.

By the time the seventh round was over, Mesi's left eye was beginning to swell, and it grew progressively worse as Barrett continued to belabor him with sharp shots to the head in the eighth.

Barrett had Mesi backing up throughout most of the ninth as he sustained his attack, closed the scoring gap, and set the stage for a rousing final round.

Realizing it was close, both fired everything they had left in their arsenals in the 10th. Barrett connected with a greater number of punches to win the round, but the pooped Mesi, who never stopped trying, put across a pair a brain-rattling rights.

Judges Arthur Mercante Sr. (USA) and Joe Dwyer (USA) had Mesi winning 95-93 and 94-93, respectively, while Tom Shreck (USA) had it even, 94-94. THE RING saw it for Mesi by a 95-94 margin.

"That was a sloppy performance, but I showed a lot of heart," said Mesi after running his record to 28-0 (25). "People wanted to see me get hit. They wanted to see me get knocked down. Well, you saw it."

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Mesi drops Barrett in the fifth, but the tide would soon turn

Understandably, Barrett, 29-3 (16), believed he should have received the nod.

"I won the fight. He won the early rounds, but I came back and dominated," he said.

Actually, both fighters helped their careers—Mesi by showing he was more than just a frontrunner who would fold when tested, and Barrett by proving he's good enough to give any second-tier heavyweight a very tough fight. He asked for a rematch, and Mesi sounded agreeable, but his promoter, Tony Holden, was far from enthusiastic.

Television: HBO

Promoters: Duva Boxing, Holden Productions

(12-6-03)

Oscar Larios KO 10 Napapol Kiatisakchokchai

Los Angeles, California: After making two consecutive defenses of the WBC super bantamweight title in Japan, Mexico's Larios stayed closer to home in turning away his third consecutive Asian challenger. Napapol, 122, Thailand, was a game and sturdy foe, but Larios, 122, was far too versatile, overcoming a shaky third round to dominate the rest of the bout and eventually stop Napapol at 2:26 of the 10th.

"Chololo" Larios was a monster in the opener, unloading everything in his arsenal while a stone-faced, almost disinterested-looking Napapol ate punch after punch. The second round was similar, but in the third, Napapol finally started fighting, and as he landed a series of heavy shots, it started looking like he was going to be too strong for the titleholder.

But the challenger's run was short-lived, and even though he still looked more physically imposing during the next few rounds, Larios was picking up points by moving well and scoring with sharp left hooks. Utilizing excellent upper- and lower-body movement, Larios put on a hit-and-don't-get-hit clinic in the sixth, and by the eighth, he was beginning to hurt Napapol both moving forward and in retreat. The 27-year-old Mexican opened the ninth with a highlight-reel run of a dozen consecutive hard jabs, sending the crowd at the Grand Olympic Auditorium into a frenzy.

The frenzy intensified in the 10th. A right hand hurt the 25-year-old Thailander early on, but he held repeatedly and somehow managed to stay upright. A huge left-right soon had Napapol out on his feet, and referee Marcos Rosales (USA) probably should have stepped in at that point. Napapol, 19-1 (15), soon dropped, but beat the count. After a followup combination, though, the referee finally stepped in, awarding Larios his third successful defense of the title.

"I was really surprised how resistant he was," said Larios, 50-3-1 (35). "After the sixth round, I thought there was no way I'd be able to knock him out."

Larios called out featherweight champ Manny Pacquiao afterward, but that will have to wait, as another trip to Japan to face a lesser foe is planned first.

Television: HBO Pay-Per-View

Promoters: Golden Boy Promotions, DiBella Entertainment

(11-22-03)

Javier Jauregui KO 11 Leavander Johnson

Los Angeles, California: In the best fight on Oscar De La Hoya's first pay-per-view event as a promoter, Jauregui scored the biggest win of his career, finally claiming an alphabet belt in his 59th fight. He outlasted fellow veteran Johnson in a crowd-pleasing brawl at the Grand Olympic Auditorium to claim the IBF lightweight title vacated earlier in '03 by Paul Spadafora.

Johnson, 135, Atlantic City, New Jersey, got off to a good start in round one, but Jauregui, 135, Mexico, finished the round well and had Johnson's left eye marked up by the bell from a series of looping right hands. If Johnson edged the first, Jauregui won the second and third clearly by applying heavy pressure and scoring well to the body and head. Johnson came back, though, in the fourth, pinning Jauregui on the ropes and landing flush shots. The problem was that Jauregui's punches were having a visible effect on Johnson, while the reverse was not true.

In the back-and-forth fifth, Johnson, 33, was faring well, until just before the bell, when Jauregui landed a left hook that momentarily dropped Johnson to a knee. Bearing a striking physical resemblance to the middle-aged version of Roberto Duran, the stubby Jauregui really began taking over with his pressure in the sixth, wobbling Johnson a couple of times and convincing him to get on his bicycle. The lanky Johnson fought back admirably in the seventh, but Jauregui, 30, walked through all of his best offerings.

As Jauregui tired, Johnson snuck back into the fight somewhat in the eighth and ninth, but the 10th was a disaster for him. He was staggered by a one-two, and then another one-two dropped him on his back with 1:15 to go in the round. Referee Raul Caiz Jr. (USA) nearly stepped in to stop it during Jauregui's followup assault, but Johnson made it through the round, and told the ringside doctor between rounds that he wanted to continue. Six seconds into the 11th, however, it was over, as the Mexican jumped right on Johnson, 32-4-2 (25), with a vicious right-left combo, forcing Caiz' intervention. It marked the fourth straight win for Jauregui, 47-10-2 (34), who, despite his journeyman's record, is now a serious player in the wide-open lightweight division.

Television: HBO Pay-Per-View

Promoters: Golden Boy Promotions, M&M Sports, DiBella Entertainment

(11-22-03)

Scott Harrison KO 11 Manuel Medina

Glasgow, Scotland: The boxing lesson that Medina, 125½, delivered at the Braehead Arena in July was not repeated. Instead, the Mexican was subjected to a painful lesson in the very same ring as Harrison, 125¾, Scotland, reversed that points defeat and re-established himself as a force in the featherweight division, dominating the fight and sending Medina to the floor several times before stopping him in the penultimate round.

Harrison, 20-2-1 (10), had blamed his lackluster showing last summer on an illness that he told nobody about until Medina had sickened him further by utilizing lateral movement and all his craft to win easily in a major upset. Early in the year, the 32-year-old Medina, 63-14 (29), had been torn apart in seven rounds by Juan Manuel Marquez for the vacant IBF featherweight title and appeared to be a fighter well past his sell-by date. Despite his strong showing against Harrison in July, this impression was strongly reinforced in the rematch. Medina looked shaky on his legs from the outset and fell over countless times without being hit.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Medina takes a jab on the kisser from Harrison

Perhaps the solid right hand with which Harrison connected in the opening round contributed to the Mexican's disheveled display. Medina was clearly hurt by the punch and went down, gaining a few precious extra seconds from Spanish referee Manuel Maracella beyond the mandatory eight-count. Harrison sensed a real opportunity for an early night, and Medina's legs remained unsteady under a torrent of blows, but he also managed to stay upright until the bell brought respite, however brief.

Jabbing solidly, Harrison was in position to dominate a weakened foe, which he did. Medina was relying on guile merely to keep Harrison at bay. His mission now was survival. He bounced around on legs that seemed incapable of being planted solidly. His punching was of the defensive variety. Harrison was punching with the intent of inflicting more damage.

Medina did claim some success by opening a cut over Harrison's left eye in the fourth round through a combination of one right hand and a number of headbutts. The referee ought to have penalized the Mexican for the way he used his head as a weapon, and Harrison's face became increasingly marked as the fight wore on. (He would require plastic surgery to repair the wounds.) Medina even managed to win a couple of rounds after the midway point, but there was never any serious threat of Harrison losing his iron grip.

The 10th round underlined this, as the Scottish fighter put Medina down twice, and only the bell prevented the Mexican from being stopped. Harrison pierced Medina's guard with another powerful right in the 11th, and this time the Mexican's corner and the referee had seen enough, Maracella waving it over with just 31 seconds gone in the round.

"I feel like a reborn fighter now," said Harrison. "I went through hell before the first Medina fight and I wasn't right on the night. This time it was Scott Harrison at 100 percent."

William Abelyan, the 25-year-old Armenian southpaw based in California, is expected to face Harrison next.

Promoter: Frank Warren

(11-29-03)

Brian Doogan

Rocky Juarez W 12 Hector Velazquez

Houston, Texas: Undefeated featherweight Juarez, 23, entered the ring facing expectations of a sensational kayo after delivering back-to-back candidates for Knockout of the Year in his previous two outings. This time out, though, he found himself in a grueling, physical battle against a tough and seasoned veteran who showed him little respect and stubbornly refused to let him impose his will. Nevertheless, Juarez won a 12-round unanimous decision over Mexican Velazquez in front of 4,100 of his hometown fans at the Reliant Center.

Stealing a page from the playbook of Bekzat Sattarkhanov, the boxer from Kazakhstan who controversially outpointed Juarez for the gold medal in the 2000 Olympics, Velazquez, 125¾, spent many early moments wrapping Juarez, 125½, in a bearhug whenever he maneuvered into infighting range. Juarez eventually began punching his way out of the clinches, but later admitted he was growing frustrated from the holding.

As soon as Velazquez, 28, opted to grapple less and punch more, the fight became a tit-for-tat affair in which many rounds were close and tough to score. Juarez boxed on even terms from the outside, often beating the taller, lankier Velazquez to the punch with stiff, compact jabs. For his part, Velazquez stood his ground on the inside, where Juarez usually dominates, by hurling looping rights upstairs and knifing left hooks to the body that seemed to stymie Juarez' own vaunted body attack.

Velazquez' scrappy and troublesome mode of combat effectively reduced Juarez' usually fluid combination punching to launching single shots at a time. Each time Velazquez threw or dodged a punch, his head—inadvertently or not—swung dangerously toward Juarez' like a third ungloved weapon. But despite the roughhousing, Juarez adapted well enough to hold his own in many of the skirmishes.

"I felt I was picking him apart and landing the more solid shots," Juarez said. "He was throwing, but not necessarily landing clean shots. I was headbutted more in this fight than all my other fights put together."

After nine rounds, Juarez upped the tempo by applying more pressure. While Velazquez remained doggedly competitive in the exchanges, it was Juarez who was landing the cleaner, snappier blows. Fighting with more urgency than he did in any previous round, Juarez forced Velazquez to go toe-to-toe in the trenches in the final round and momentarily hurt him with a crunching left hook to the ribs.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Juarez catches tough Velazquez with a right uppercut

Judge Ray Hawkins (USA) scored the fight 115-113, Gale Van Hoy (USA) had it 117-111, and Pasquale Procopio (Canada) tallied 118-110, all for Juarez. THE RING had Juarez winning, 116-114. The referee was Laurence Cole (USA).

"I'm my worst critic," Juarez, 19-0 (14), said. "I thought I won the fight—no doubts about that—and I thought I did good, but could have done better. I'd say I probably lost three rounds, four at the most."

Velazquez, 37-10-1 (27), predictably disagreed with the verdict, claiming he won every round except the final one. Asked if he thought he was robbed by a hometown decision, he responded, "I don't think so, I know so."

Promoters: Main Events, Browning Boxing
(11-22-03)
Television: Showtime
Peter Lim

Francisco Bojado W 12 Juan Carlos Rubio

Houston, Texas: Showcasing his newfound penchant for defense and patience, "Panchito" Bojado avenged the only loss of his career with a dominating, if unspectacular victory over Rubio at the Reliant Center. Since enlisting Floyd Mayweather Sr. as his trainer after his shocking February 2002 loss to Rubio, Bojado has evolved from a seek-and-destroy banger into a more rounded, if less exciting boxer-puncher. Utilizing blinding hand speed, mongoose-like reflexes, different angles, and perhaps too much caution, Bojado won an easy unanimous decision.

"I went in there to win, and to tell you the truth, I really didn't want to knock him out," Bojado said. "I wanted to prove to everybody that I'm getting better—my offense, my defense, my jab, my right hand, my pull-counter, and everything else."

Bojado, 20, began the bout fighting from a low crouch that rendered Rubio offensively impotent throughout the bout. The Mexican journeyman who outboxed, outslugged, and knocked Bojado down in their previous fight was utterly befuddled and unable to find his range against an opponent that close to the ground.

"He's a tall fighter, so we knew if I stayed low on some occasions he was going to miss a lot of his shots," Bojado said.

Bojado, 140, Los Angeles, California, dominated the first six rounds by easily penetrating Rubio's superior reach and picking him apart with quick one-twos and left hooks. Finally showing some aggression in the seventh round, Rubio, 26, began luring Bojado into exchanges and found a measure of success by landing clusters of punches, although they were of the pitty-pat variety. Bojado, though, quickly regained control with a volley of unanswered punches at round's end.

In the 10th, Bojado wobbled Rubio, 140, with a left hook, forcing him to clinch. Still exercising caution, Bojado gingerly pursued his retreating opponent across the ring and hurt him again on several occasions with one-twos and left hooks, but couldn't put together enough clean punches to knock him out.

A sharp counter right to the chin sent Rubio crumpling to the

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Bojado gets his revenge against Rubio

canvas in the 11th round. Bojado momentarily stood over his fallen foe and taunted him, which only seemed to spur Rubio to his feet abruptly. Bojado mounted a followup assault, but Rubio, 29-7-2 (10), proved adept in survival tactics.

Curiously enough, Bojado, 14-1 (11), opted to move and counter instead of pressing his attack in the 12th round. After doing little for the first three minutes, both fighters continued punching when the final bell sounded, forcing referee Laurence Cole (USA) to physically pry them apart.

Ray Hawkins (USA) and Pasquale Procopio (Canada) scored it 118-109, while Gale Van Hoy (USA) scored it 119-108, all for Bojado. THE RING had Bojado winning by a score of 120-108.

Promoter: Main Events, Browning Boxing
(11-22-03)
Television: Showtime
Peter Lim

Juan Diaz KO 6 Joel Perez

Houston, Texas: In a crossroads bout, undefeated prospect Diaz stopped hometown rival Perez in the sixth round of a scheduled 10-rounder to claim the unofficial title of best lightweight in Houston. Although the showdown between the two popular local boxers ceded top billing to Juarez-Velazquez and Bojado-Rubio on Showtime, it was the most anticipated bout of the evening among the fans at the Reliant Center.

After a competitive opening round that saw the fighters trade on relatively even terms, Diaz, 20, began pulling ahead in the second round. Dictating a torrid pace and forcing the fight into the phone booth, "Baby Bull" repeatedly connected with head-snapping right uppercuts before dropping the usually sturdy-chinned Perez with a well-timed left hook to the jaw at the end the round.

"I feel like my power is improving as I get older," Diaz said. "My body's developing more and getting more mature, so my power is getting a little better now."

Perez, 32, shook off the knockdown to remain fairly competitive in the third and fourth rounds, meeting his relentless, non-stop punching machine of an opponent with counter flurries punctuated with double left hooks. But while Perez has never been short on willpower, he simply lacked the firepower to hurt Diaz or back him up. Doing a decent impersonation of the Energizer Bunny, Diaz stepped up the already-heated tempo of the fight in the fifth as Perez began to fade, and dominated the exchanges with sharper, cleaner punches.

In the sixth round, Diaz, 135, drove Perez, 136, to the ropes with a double jab-straight right combination and subsequently bounced his head around like a speedbag with a two-fisted, rapid-fire barrage. Perez spun unsteadily away, only to find Diaz chasing him down, cutting off the ring, and bombarding him with more leather. As Diaz continued to pursue and pummel, Perez' chief second, Juan Lopez, decided to toss in the towel, prompting the stoppage from referee Tim Adams (USA) at the 1:27 mark.

"I feel like I'm ready [for a world title shot] right now, but I'm not going to rush into things," Diaz, 23-0 (11), said. "If the opportunity comes, I'm going to take it. But if I have to wait a little longer, then I'll take a couple more fights to learn a little bit more, and then I'll fight for the title."

Former title challenger Perez, 34-7-2 (19), announced his retirement after the fight. In his previous bout, Perez was stopped by Miguel Cotto with a bodyshot in the fourth round.

Promoter: Main Events, Browning Boxing
(11-22-03)
Television: Showtime
Peter Lim

Sven Ottke W 12 Robin Reid

Nuremberg, Germany: The challenger proved to be aptly named, because robbin' Reid was just about what happened. Despite the appallingly one-sided refereeing of Roger Tilleman (Belgium), Reid, 168, England, did the more effective work and landed the better punches against an apparently declining 36-year-old Ottke, 168, Germany, but still lost by unanimous decision.

"You don't expect any favors when you come to fight the champion in Germany, but at least Dick Turpin wore a mask when he robbed people," said Reid, referring to the 18th century English highwayman.

It was Ottke's 20th defense of the IBF super middleweight title. Reid was formerly the holder of the WBC version, a belt he won on the road against Italy's Vincenzo Nardiello.

"It's making a mockery of a world title fight when all he has to do to win is survive," Reid added. "As for the referee, he was warning me practically for hitting him at one point. I had no chance here. There's no point fighting him unless it's in England and my mum and two mates are judging. Even then it might be a bit iffy."

Reid's disillusionment was understandable. He started well. The first third of the fight was his as he drew Ottke in and landed good left hooks and right hands and took little of note in reply. Yet he was behind on all three official scorecards after five rounds. Tilleman was getting to him, too. The referee's handling of the bout was a disgrace, stopping the action to warn the fighters, mostly Reid, after almost every exchange. The first warning appeared to be for using the inside of the glove, but it was Reid's jab that was catching the objective eye instead. In the fourth round, he caught Ottke with a long right and the titleholder was shaken, though he did retaliate with good jabs.

Word got back to the 32-year-old Reid's corner between the

PHOTO BY OLIVER LANG/GETTY IMAGES

Reid did all he could to take the title from Ottke

fifth and sixth rounds that he was behind.

"You're joking," he said to trainer Bryan Hughes.

"No, I'm not," came the reply. "Knock him out."

If there must be criticism made of Reid's performance, it would be that he was not aggressive enough to put the matter sufficiently beyond dispute. He did put a combination together in the sixth and Ottke fell to the floor, but the referee ruled it a slip, then deducted a point from Reid for "dangerous use of the head." The challenger could not believe it.

He went back to work and won the seventh—even the judges gave him the round—but Ottke did what he does best over the final five rounds, making the fight messy and doing enough to catch the eye of the crowd and the judges. Reid, 36-4-1 (27), was still catching Ottke often enough, however, to raise a lump over the German's right eye. And he did enough in the final round to win that, too. But all three judges scored emphatically for Ottke, 33-0 (6): Giulio Mancini (Italy) 116-113, Levi Martinez (Mexico) 115-112, and Franz Marti (Switzerland) 116-111. All three cards were adjusted from the original announcement of 115-113 (twice) and 117-112. THE RING scored for Reid, 115-112.

"You can win 10 out of 12 rounds and still not win over here," said Reid's promoter, Jess Harding.

Promoter: Wilfried Sauerland

(12-13-03)

Brian Doogan

Ricky Hatton W 12 Ben Tackie

Manchester, England: With an undefeated record, his "Hitman" nickname, and a following in his home city rivaling that for his beloved soccer team, Manchester City, certain things about Hatton were known coming into his fight with Tackie. What we still wanted to find out was simple: Could he remain on track against world-class opposition? The answer was in the affirmative at the M.E.N. Arena, where a crowd of almost 17,000 packed in to witness Hatton's arrival on the junior welterweight division's main stage.

That the 25-year-old is a bona fide contender for the mantle worn by Kostya Tszyu, who was preparing for a championship defense against Sharmba Mitchell as this issue went to bed, is now beyond dispute. Hatton, 139½, displayed not only his trademark power-packed hooks, debilitating body attack, and formidable workrate against the veteran Tackie, 139, Glendale, California, via Ghana, he also showed that he has boxing skills to match. This was the finest boxing display of his career to date. Tackie is no longer as good as he once was, beaten in successive fights and in conclusive fashion by Tszyu and Mitchell coming in, but he was a willing warrior to the final bell. Hatton, on the night, was just a better man.

He imposed himself on the durable African from the opening bell, and it was soon clear that his high energy level and the quality of his punching would be the dominant factors. His jab was a significant weapon. Hatton used it to get inside and he used it to keep Tackie outside of his own punching range. What kept him in danger was Tackie's resilience and his refusal to accept the inevitable. The 30-year-old visitor hit the floor from a left-right in the opening round, but referee Mickey Vann (England) ruled it a slip, and Tackie kept rolling on, usually into punishing punches from the rampant Englishman.

By the halfway point, Hatton's lead was almost insurmountable. Tackie's right eye was swelling. His belligerence was just about all he had left. All that he could hope for was that a single punch would turn it his way. Hatton kept pumping out the punches, but in the penultimate round was finally caught by a solid right hand. It was Tackie's best punch all night. Hatton held on, but took the blow well and was quickly back into his rhythm.

Another right in the final round proved that Tackie, 25-5 (16), was still trying. Again the punch got Hatton's attention, but he had fought too hard to let it slip away now. The final bell was met by a thunderous roar from the crowd. Hatton ducked beneath the ropes and made for his father, mother, and brother in the front row and gave each of them a kiss and a hug to complete a fine night.

"To know that I had beaten one of the best fighters in the division, that was a great feeling," said Hatton, 34-0 (25).

Eddie Marshall (South Africa) and Jean-Louis Legland (France) both scored 120-109, while Tony Walker (England) made it 118-110, all for Hatton. THE RING scored 119-109 for the Mancunian.

What's next for Hatton is uncertain, as he hopes to step up even more significantly against either the Tszyu-Mitchell winner or perhaps Arturo Gatti.

Television: Showtime

Promoter: Frank Warren

(12-13-03)

Brian Doogan

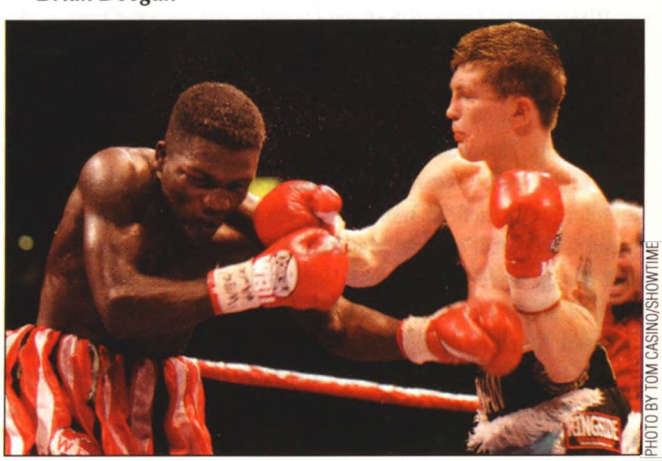

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

"The Hitman" staggers Tackie with a right

Mahyar Monshipour KO 7 Jairo Tagliaferro

Levallois, France: After seven rounds, there was nothing more that Tagliaferro, 122, Venezuela, could do that he had not tried and failed at. Monshipour, 119¾, France, via Iran, was too strong, and Eleazar Castillo, the Venezuelan's trainer, had seen enough and pulled his man out, leaving the crowd at the Palais des Sports Marcel Cerdan to acclaim Monshipour's successful first defense of the WBA super bantamweight title.

The 28-year-old won the belt from Salim Medjkoune last July, stopping the southpaw in the final round. Monshipour's father is the former deputy chief of police in Tehran, but the son has no intention of having the term "former" applied to him anytime soon. Tagliaferro, 10-1 (8), never threatened as a challenger, apart from one moment in the fourth round, and his corner made the correct decision to end the fight when they did.

Coming in, Tagliagerro was unbeaten but inexperienced. His biggest win came last May, a 10th-round stoppage of former bantamweight titleholder Eidy Moya. But Monshipour's strength proved too much from the opening bell. Monshipour, 24-2-2 (15), is crude but effective, and Tagliaferro absorbed punches from all angles in the opening three rounds, not allowed for one moment to settle.

In the fourth round, however, Tagliaferro saw an opening and went for it. The right hand that struck Monshipour's jaw was his best punch of the night, and it made the local favorite wobble. But there was to be nothing more than that from the Venezuelan. For Monshipour, the danger passed quickly and he resumed his relentless assault of the challenger until the end of the seventh, when the wisest of choices was duly made.

Promoter: AB Stars Productions
(12-16-03)
Brian Doogan

Fernando Vargas KO 7 Tony Marshall

Tucson, Arizona: Vargas knew he'd have to shake off some rust in his second fight back since his loss to Oscar De La Hoya, but frost was another matter. Facing 38-degree weather at an outdoor arena, the fighters' breaths created fog that swirled around flying leather, and when they started sweating, steam rose from their torsos. Nevertheless, Vargas, who was battling back pain that had already caused the bout to be postponed once, dismantled the well-traveled Marshall before a crazed swarm of 4,900 at the Casino del Sol.

"I'm very happy all my fans showed up, even at a thousand degrees below zero," said Vargas. "It was very cold, but I was warmed up. This was my first fight outside, and probably my last."

Vargas, 160, Oxnard, California, looked a bit soft around the middle, but carried far more punch than paunch and kept his eyes glued to Marshall's chest. Marshall, 158¼, Guyana, had the perfect straight-up style to showcase Vargas' back-to-boxing approach. Several sweet one-twos in the second set up a straight right that dumped Marshall. He was up quickly, but on rubber legs. The taller Marshall tried to chop his way back in the third, but Vargas remained just a couple of combinations away from a stoppage as ref Bobby Ferrara (USA) checked Marshall closely.

A clash of heads in the fourth ripped open a cut next to Vargas' left eye, and blood covered his chest and trunks. In round five, Vargas, 26, gritted his teeth and unloaded a huge series of rights that pasted Marshall, 33, along the strands. It reached the point where somebody could have stepped in, but Marshall hung tough.

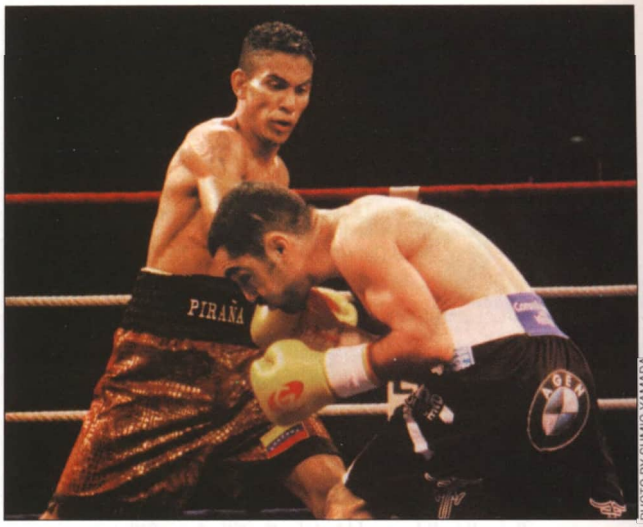

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Tagliaferro enjoys a bright moment before falling to Monshipour

In the seventh, Vargas rammed in shots, but Marshall, hurt and cut badly on his right eye from a butt, hung on. Between rounds, though, Ferrara waved it over. The crowd went ballistic and the media squawked, but probably more from bloodlust than justice.

"He took too many consecutive head punches, snapping back and forth like whiplash," stated Ferrara, "My job is his safety."

"At no time was I hurt. I've been hit a lot harder before," said the unbowed Marshall, 36-12-6 (12). "After the knockdown, he never got me solid. It should have been stopped when he was cut. But if the referee did protect me, I say thank you."

"I had him going a couple times," said Vargas, 24-2 (22). "I hurt my hand early and my back is still my back, a little stiff. This is the second time I've been cut by butts; I didn't trip on it. Sometimes I get overly excited when I hurt somebody. My corner calmed me down, and I boxed intelligently until he opened up. I'm coming back here because everybody showed plenty of love. I dedicate this to my mother for her birthday."

Disappointment emerged a week later as Vargas cancelled a February meeting with Javier Castellejo due to his back problems.

Television: Telefutura
Promoter: Main Events
(12-12-03)
Phil Woolever

Kermit Cintron KO 9 Hicklet Lau

Tucson, Arizona: Undefeated prospect Cintron, 147, Reading, Pennsylvania, was the main warmup act for Vargas-Marshall, but almost found himself too chilled at the Casino del Sol's outdoor arena when temperatures dipped below 40 degrees. Still, he warmed up in time to get rid of the stubborn Lau, indicating that the 24-year-old is ready to take on ranked contenders.

Lau, 147¾, a Cuban based in Miami, Florida, has troubled quite a few favored fighters over the years. Against Cintron, he got blasted all night and saw several opportunities to fold, but he never made it easy, and protested the bout's inevitable finish.

The 27-year-old Lau was skeptical of Cintron's power statistics and tried to lunge inside. Cintron immediately nailed him with straight rights that initiated a pattern of Lau hanging on. Cintron looked strong, calm, and composed as he chipped away.

Lau was aggressive in round two and confused Cintron with an unorthodox assault that resulted in clashing heads. Cintron scored with big uppercuts, but Lau cranked up rights from the outfield and got the better of it for a while. They traded huge looping shots to the crowd's delight in fine toe-to-toe action. Lau emerged from a scrum with a cut on his left eye, ruled the result of an accidental butt.

By the third frame, Lau was far the worse for wear and got on his toes in survival mode. Lau complained of elbows, but Cintron controlled the fight with legitimate jabs and combinations. The bigger the punch, the bigger the grinning response from Lau.

Lau retreated further in the middle rounds as Cintron scored with big uppercuts. Lau insisted Cintron wasn't doing any damage, but loud, echoing smacks suggested otherwise. Yet just when it seemed Lau was overwhelmed, he landed something back.

A frustrated Cintron zeroed in for the finish in the ninth. A huge right splattered Lau along the ropes. It might as well have been over then, but Lau took a couple more conks on the way down. He got up dazed, confused, and willing, but referee Ruben Carreon (USA) properly waved it over at 45 seconds of the session. Lau fell to 18-11-2 (9).

"First of all, it was cold out there," said Cintron, 21-0 (19). "I had to stay warm and relaxed. The first couple rounds I felt good, then the cold just hit me. I started breathing weird and my chest was hurting.

"I want to get back in the gym, keep working hard, and be ready for a big fight."

Television: Telefutura

Promoter: Main Events

(12-12-03)

Phil Woolever

Danny Green KO 6 Eric Lucas

Montreal, Quebec: The age-old wisdom says there is no substitute for experience. But Green showed Lucas there is also no substitute for a good right hand, as the two-year pro stopped 12-year veteran Lucas in the sixth round in front of 12,000 shocked Quebecois at Montreal's Bell Centre. The victory gave "The Green Machine" the WBC "interim" super middleweight title, meaning he's next in line for a crack at titleholder Markus Beyer.

Beyer was supposed to be facing Lucas, the man from whom he'd wrested the belt last May on a dubious decision in Germany, but had to pull out of the rematch with Lucas due to an injury. As it turned out, the 32-year-old Lucas, 168, Montreal, would have been better off facing the feather-fisted Beyer instead of Green, who'd already dominated Beyer in August, only to lose on a highly controversial disqualification. Both Lucas and Green deserved rematches with Beyer, but now it's Green who has proven himself the more deserving.

The action heated up quickly in the first two rounds, as Lucas went on the offensive with left jabs, double left hooks to the body and head, and the occasional right. The 28-year-old Green, 167½, Australia, started out tentatively. He later admitted he was nervous,

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Green bombs Lucas en route to surprising kayo

burning energy by dancing up a storm in the dressing room before entering the ring.

But in round three, Green's butterflies disappeared, and his fists began a tap dance of their own on Lucas' face. The man from Down Under lured the former beltholder into the ropes on several occasions, countering with hard rights to the Canadian's head. Lucas took them leaning down, leaving himself in no position to reply. The raucous pro-Lucas crowd sensed trouble, but most figured the third stanza was just an off round for their favorite.

In reality, though, it was the beginning of the end for Lucas. The emboldened Green continued to rake him with hard rights in round four. Lucas' last attack of any consequence was another double left hook to the body and, late in the round, a head-snapping right, but the difference in hand speed had become increasingly evident, as Green retaliated with a counter right that briefly staggered Lucas along the ropes. By now, most of the crowd noise was coming from the small but enthusiastic contingent of Aussies who had made the trip, led by Green's flag-waving wife, Nina.

Green kept up the momentum in the fifth. His fast hands were carrying the day, particularly in mid-ring, where his right fist peppered Lucas at will, and he also proved surprisingly nimble at slipping Lucas' punches. Even the Green jab started landing with regularity.

Green accelerated his opponent's demise in the sixth, rocking Lucas with a vicious left hook, then driving the wobbling Francophone into a neutral corner with a right-left-right combo. As the flurry continued, Lucas was driven to one knee. After rising at the count of seven, Lucas glanced left to his corner, and they threw in the towel at the 3:00 mark, setting off a wild celebration in the Green corner, led by his trainer, Jeff Fenech.

Afterward, the normally indomitable Lucas, 36-6-3 (13), explained what happened.

"I had a bad night," he said. "His hand speed surprised me. I hurt my rib sparring a week ago, but I didn't want to pull out of the fight. But I make no excuses; Green was the better man tonight."

Said the victorious Green, 17-1 (17): "I was definitely nervous at first, but in the third round Jeff told me to step it up. Eric is much tougher than Beyer, a much better fighter, but Jeff said the way to succeed against Eric was with volume punching."

Promoter: Interbox

(12-20-03)

Mike Greenhill ■

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Feb. 1984: Don King Talks And Talks And Talks. Plus: Leonard's return, Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, 1983 quotes, Marvin Hagler, Johnny Bratton, Gerald Hayes, Hagler-Duran color.

June 1984: Bumphus, Lockridge, Duva: "That Championship Year." Plus: Ferdie Pacheco, Harry Arroyo, Holmes-Coetzee preview, Pipino Cuevas, Aaron Pryor, Battling Nelson-Joe Gans, Witherspoon-Page.

July 1984: Bazooka's Aim Is True: Gomez Shoots Down LaPorte In The Battle For San Juan. Plus: Michael Spinks, Vinny Pazienza, Tyrone Crawley, Leonard's comeback, Chandler-Sandoval, Hagler-Roldan.

Aug. 1984: The Ring Olympic Special. Plus: Bramble-Mancini, Hatcher-Bumphus, Mark Breland, Sugar Ray Leonard, Albert Davila, Bonecrusher-Bruno.

Oct. 1984: The Beast From The East: John Mugabi Strikes Terror Into The Hearts Of Men. Plus: Olympics, Bill Costello, Davey Moore, Wilfred Benitez, King's heavyweights.

Dec. 1984: Hagler Hammers Hamsho. Plus: Barry McGuigan, James Broad, Pinklon Thomas, Julian Jackson.

Jan. 1985: Holmes-Bonecrusher Color Action. Plus: Gerry Cooney, pro debuts (Breland, Hill, Taylor, Biggs, Whitaker, Holyfield), Santos-Medal, Meza-Garza.

Feb. 1985: Showdown: Page Clobbers Coetzee For WBA Title. Plus: Larry Holmes, lightweights, Cooney-Chaplin, McCallum-Minchillo.

March 1985: Thomas Hearns—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Annual ratings, Fight, Upset, Round, Comeback, and Prospect of the Year.

May 1985: The Rematch In Reno: Bramble-Mancini Color Action. Plus: Donald Curry, Aaron Pryor, McGuigan-LaPorte.

June 1985: Holmes' Last Hurrah? Holmes-Bey Color Action. Plus: Holmes vs. all-time greats, Paul-Arroyo, 1901.

Aug. 1985: Seven Elected To The Ring Hall Of Fame (Jose Napoles, Jake LaMotta, Panama Al Brown, Manuel Ortiz, Young Stribling, Thomas Jackling, Lord Lonsdale). Plus: Spinks-Holmes preview, Barry McGuigan.

Oct. 1985: The "Macho Man" Rides Again. Plus: Jeff Fenech, Berbick-Green, John E. Garcia, Dwight Muhammad Qawi, McCallum-Braxton.

Nov. 1985: Will Hagler Feast On The Beast? Plus: Hagler-Mugabi & Hearns-Shuler previews, Lonnie Smith, Pintor-Meza, Chuck Hull, Benitez-Moley.

Dec. 1985: Michael Spinks: Against All Odds. Plus: Curry-McCrory preview, McGuigan-Taylor, Alexis Arguello, Michael Olajide, Chavez-Pratchett.

Jan. 1986: In Search Of A Heavyweight Champion. Plus: Azumah Nelson, Arguello-Jefferson, Olympic update, Chicago boxing.

May 1986: Hagler vs. Mugabi: Marvelous Marvin Tames The Beast. Plus: Marvin Johnson, McGuigan-Cabrera, Bramble-Crawley, Tyson-Ferguson, 10 worst decisions.

June 1986: Barry's Back In The USA: McGuigan Breathes A Breath Of Fresh Air Into American Fight Scene. Plus: Bobby Czyz, Robbie Sims, Qawi-Holyfield preview, Berbick-Thomas, Bruno-Coetzee.

July 1986: Spinks-Holmes II: Who Really Won? Plus: Frank Bruno, Richie Sandoval, Kevin Watts, Tyson-Tillis, Boza-Edwards-Alli, Johnson-Burns.

Aug. 1986: Is Sugar Ray Still Sweet? Plus: Lloyd Honeyghan, Tyson-Green, Cooney-Gregg, Hall of Fame (Eder Jofre, Benny Lynch, Bud Taylor, Sam McVey, Nat Langham, John Chambers), Bernardo Pinango.

Sept. 1986: Gerry Cooney vs. Mike Tyson: Who Would Win? Plus: Cruz-McGuigan, Hearns-Medal, Tyson-Gross, Sims-Duran.

Dec. 1986: The Weekend That Shook The Boxing World. Rosario-Bramble & Honeyghan-Curry. Plus: Butch Lewis interview, Buster Drayton, Hector Camacho, Jake LaMotta.

April 1987: Hagler-Leonard Souvenir Issue. Plus: Czyz, Orlando Canizales, Mugabi-Thomas, Biggs-Snipes, Chavez-LaPorte, Bonecrusher-Witherspoon II, Haugen-Paul.

May 1987: Mike Tyson: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Year-end awards, The Ring annual ratings, Louie Espinoza, Herol Graham.

June 1987: Vinny Paz: Phenom Or Phony? Plus: Tyson-Bonecrusher, Mark Breland, Brian Mitchell, Evander Holyfield, Czyz-Edwards, Olajide-Lee, Curry-Montgomery.

July 1987: Spinks-Cooney: The Fight That Refused To Die. Plus: The new Ring ratings, Terry Marsh, George Foreman's return, Khaosai Galaxy, Hearns-Andries, Whitaker-Mayweather.

Sept. 1987: Michael Olajide: The Look Of The Future? Plus: Tyson-Thomas, Jeff Fenech, middleweight muddle, Tsuyoshi Hamada, Juan Roldan, Harold Knight.

Nov. 1987: Tyson Wins Heavyweight Triple Crown. Plus: McCallum-Curry, Carlos Monzon interview, triple champions, Orlin & Terry Norris, Ramirez-Alli, Fenech-Richardson, Matthew Hilton.

Dec. 1987: Spinks & Lewis: Boxing's Beastie Boys. Plus: Starling-Breland, Ramzi Hassan, Honeyghan-Hatcher, Holyfield-Ocasio.

Jan. 1988: Darrin Van Horn—Million Dollar Baby? Plus: Evander Holyfield, Hill-Stewart, Juan Coggi, great hookers, AIDS.

Feb. 1988: Gold Outshines Glitter: Tate Tops Olajide. Plus: Tyson-Biggs, Kalambay-Barkley, Hearns-Roldan, fights we'd like to see.

March 1988: Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns: "Now I Own History." Plus: Lockridge & Mayweather, Tony Burton, Julio Cesar Chavez, blood.

April 1988: Evander Holyfield: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Special year-end awards, Holyfield-Qawi II, Foreman-Sekorski, Hill-Angulo.

May 1988: George Foreman: "I Can Beat Tyson." Plus: Tyson-Holmes, Jesse Benavides, Showtime, no-knockout artists.

Sept. 1988: Sugar Ray: Here He Comes Again! Plus: Andries-Czyz, Kid Chocolate, Don Dunphy, Don Lalonde.

Oct. 1988: Mike Tyson: What Price Glory? Plus: Tyson-Spinks, Hearns-Barkley, Davey Moore.

Nov. 1988: Donny Lalonde: "Sugar Ray is Out Of His Mind!" Plus: Hall of Fame selections (Carlos Ortiz, Joe Brown, Billy Graham, Cus D'Amato, Jimmy Jacobs), Nunn-Tate, Molinares-Starling, Honeyghan-Chung, '88 Olympians.

Jan. 1989: Meldrick Taylor: Philly Phenom. Plus: Marvin Hagler, Alex Wallau, Taylor-McGirt, Olympic results.

Feb. 1989: Julio Cesar Chavez. Plus: Chavez-Ramirez, all-time lightweight ratings, Louie Espinoza, Simon Brown, Roger Mayweather.

March 1989: Hearns Next For Sugar Ray? Plus: Leonard-Lalonde, Prince Charles Williams, Hearns-Kinchen, Nunn-Roldan, Hines-Hilton.

May 1989: The Best Of '88. Plus: Year-end awards, Evander Holyfield, Pryor-Morales, Fenech-Navarro.

Jan. 1990: Boxing's Bible Reborn At Age 68. Plus: Carlos Monzon, Mike Tyson, Leonard-Duran, Daniel Zaragoza, Nunn-Barkley, Whitaker-Ramirez, George Foreman (color).

Feb. 1990: Mike Tyson: Riddick Bowe & Ray Mercer Take Aim. Plus: Bobby Czyz, Gerry Cooney, Chuck Wepner, Antonio Esparragoza, Roman-Laciar.

March 1990: The '80s—Great Fights, Great Fighters (color). Plus: Jeff Harding, Evander Holyfield, Pete Rademacher, Sharkey-McCoy.

April 1990: Pernell Whitaker: Fighter Of The Year (color). Plus: Tiger Flowers, Duran-Leonard, Chavez-Taylor preview, Jorge Paez, Ali-Cooper.

May 1990: Big George Talks Tough: "Tyson Won't Be That Difficult!" Plus: Ed Hopson, Russian fighters, grudge wars, Archie Moore, Kid Berg, Marcel Cerdan, Chavez-Cortes.

June 1990: Buster! How James Douglas Shocked The World. Plus: Michael Moorer, Camacho-Paez, Tommy Farr, excuses, Dick Tiger, Ruben Olivares-Jeff Chandler.

July 1990: "I'm Hungrier Than Ever Before," By Evander Holyfield. Plus: James Toney, Buddy McGirt, Glenwood Brown, Aaron Davis, Michael Carbajal, Jorge Paez, Kid Gavilan, Mark Breland, Ali-Liston II (color).

Aug. 1990: Chavez: His Greatness Confirmed ... Is He The Best Mexican Fighter Ever? Plus: Matthew Saad Muhammad, John L. Sullivan & Mike Tyson, Michael Nunn, Mark Breland, Harold Johnson, Cus D'Amato, Louis-Godoy (color).

Sept. 1990: Marvin Hagler—Can He Resist The Irresistible Temptation? Plus: Thomas Hearns, Sanchez-Saddler, Paul Banke, puncher vs. chin, Beau Jack, Robinson-LaMotta (color).

Nov. 1990: Tyson vs. Foreman. Can Iron Mike Stop The Blast From The Past? Plus: Bruce Seldon, best chins, Sullivan-Kilrain (color), Azumah Nelson, LaStarza.

Dec. 1990: Exclusive Annual Report: The State Of The Game. Plus: Douglas-Holyfield preview, Julio Cesar Chavez, Joe Grim, Whitaker-Nazario, Rosi-Van Horn, Benny Leonard, Douglas-Tyson (color).

Jan. 1991: Boxing's Baddest Bad Boy: Nigel Benn Plays By His Own Rules. Plus: Roberto Duran, Kid Akeem, Jose Napoles, Jimmy Carruthers, LaMotta-Zale, Dempsey-Willard (color).

Feb. 1991: Boxing On TV—Now You'll Pay! Plus: Ismael Laguna, Tommy Morrison in *Rocky V*, Reggie Tuur, Chiquita Gonzalez, Harold Green, Joe Louis.

April 1991: Julio Cesar Chavez—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Tyson-Stewart, James Leija, Wilfred Benitez, Pedro Decima, Moore-Bassey.

June 1991: Pain, Frustration, Confidence, And Hope: Meldrick Taylor's Life After Chavez. Plus: Foreman-Holyfield preview, Norris-Leonard, David Kamau, Freddie Steele, Bennie Briscoe, Leonard's career (color).

July 1991: Tyson's Title Hopes: He Ain't What He Used To Be ... But It's Not Gonna Matter. Plus: Eusebio Pedroza, Myung Woo Yuh, Willie Meehan, Hearns-Hill preview, computer junior welterweight tournament, Gomez-Fenech, controversial heavyweight finishes (color).

Aug. 1991: Foreman Gives Holyfield A Fight ... And The World A Thrill (color). Plus: Making weight, Harry Greb, Kevin Kelley, Louis-Conn I, Simon Brown-Blocker, Chavez-Duplessis, Sugar Ray Robinson.

Oct. 1991: A Hit Again—How Far Can Thomas Hearns Go? Plus: Battling Levinsky, Oba Carr, Dave McAuley, Muhammad Ali, Lou Ambers, Luther McCarty, ethnic matchups, computer light heavy tournament, Cerdan-Hagler, Rocky Marciano (color).

Dec. 1991: Evander Holyfield vs. Mike Tyson: Who Will Win And Why. Plus: Eddie Aliano, Jack Britton, Muhammad Ali, Pernell Whitaker, rating the 44 world champions, Marcel Cerdan, Henry Cooper, Ezzard Charles-Jersey Joe Walcott (color).

May 1992: James Toney—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Myung Woo Yuh, Khaosai Galaxy, Rocky Graziano, Billy Soose, Roy Jones, James Warring, Duran-Chavez, Marvin Hagler (color).

July 1992: Does Larry Holmes Deserve A Title Shot? Plus: Nelson-Fenech II, Tracy Patterson, Kelley-Dorsey, fat fighters, Buchanan-Camacho, Holmes-Ali (color).

Aug. 1992: Holyfield-Holmes Prefight. Holmes: "I See Me Takin' Holyfield Outta There." Plus: Iran Barkley, Herbie Hide, George Foreman, Tex Cobb, Carnival of Champions, Harry Greb, Haugen-Mancini, Oscar De La Hoya, Gene Tunney (color).

Sept. 1992: Chavez: Unbeaten At 80-0, But What If He Had To Face These Guys? Plus: Bobby Czyz, Genaro Hernandez, Norris-Taylor, Tommy Gibbons, Sugar Ray Leonard's career, Sugar Ray Robinson (color).

Nov. 1992: Is Riddick Bowe The Next Heavyweight Champion? Plus: Morrison-Hipp, Canizales-Chandler, Chavez-Camacho preview, Australia Best of Nation, Tyson speaks from prison, Corbett-Sullivan (color), Tracy Patterson, Pat Barrett, Knockout Brown.

Feb. 1993: America's Tribute To The Brown Bomber: Joe Louis. Plus: Virgil Hill, Junior Jones, Roger Mayweather, Chicago boxing, Orlando Zulueta, Jose Napoles (color).

April 1993: Riddick Bowe—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: "Grand Slam" fight card, Toney-Barkley preview, Morris East, Joe Louis-John Henry Lewis, All-Time Top 10: Argentina, Fighters of the Year (color).

May 1993: Oscar De La Hoya's Sprint To The Title: Is He Good Enough *Now?* Plus: Carbajal-Gonzalez preview, Lennox Lewis, The Ring Poll, Freddie Pendleton.

Aug. 1994: Bowe's Back! Determined To Do It Again. Plus: Eric Griffin, Pernell Whitaker, Ray Mercer, Roger Donoghue, State of the Game (midterm report), All-Time Top 10: The Philippines.

Dec. 1994: Fighting-Mad! James Toney Just Wants To Beat People Up. Plus: Duran & Robinson, Don King, Mike McCallum, injuries (part II), Tom Molineaux.

Jan. 1995: A Puncher's Dream: Oliver McCall Upsets Boxing's Balance Of Power. Plus: Ruelas brothers, Quincy Taylor, "Unfinished Business," Dave Maier, All-Time Top 10: Canada.

May 1995: The State Of The Game. Plus: Olzubek & Arbachakov, Gonzalez-Kelley, Pazienza-Duran II, All-Time Top 10: France.

Oct. 1995 (92-Page Special): Mismatch? Don't Tell Peter McNeeley! Plus: Fights we'd like to see, Jo-el Scott, Bronco McKart, when stop fights?

Dec. 1995: Mike Tyson (vs. Peter McNeeley): The Beast Is Yet To Come. Plus: Morrison-Lewis preview, Naseem Hamed, Chiquita Gonzalez, Gaspar Ortega, 10 best chins.

Jan. 1996: King Bruno! A Hero Always ... A Winner At Last. Plus: Julio Cesar Chavez, Oscar De La Hoya, Chris Eubank, Eddie Perkins, who's hot/who's not.

Feb. 1996: Bowe's The Man (For Now), But Is He Man Enough For Tyson? Plus: Lennox Lewis, Hamed-Barrera, Paul Banke, Vince Phillips, boxing on Madison Ave., What If ... Leonard-Pryor.

Sept. 1996: Lennox Lewis: Tough Enough For Tyson? Plus: Lewis-Mercer, Olympic team, Pernell Whitaker, Mark Johnson, Rocky, Scrapiron Johnson, heavyweight hopefuls.

Nov. 1996: Pole-Axed! Low Blows, Sinking Bowe, Ugly Show. Plus: Bowe-Golota I, Blinky Palermo, exciting fighters, Winky Wright, Joe Brown.

Dec. 1996: Our Spin On Roy Jones. Plus: heavyweight division, Olympic recap, Luis Rodriguez, Puerto Rican fighters, Danny Hodge, Saad Muhammad.

June 1997 (Special Collector's Issue): Holyfield-Tyson II: What It Means For Now ... And Forever. Plus: Holyfield-Tyson fight poster, Naseem Hamed, computer unification, Sayers-Heenan, state of the game.

Oct. 1997: Bang! Naseem Hamed Takes Aim At America. Plus: Riddick Bowe, Phillips-Tszyu, Saman Sorjaturong, Bobby Dykes.

Nov. 1997: Is Mike Tyson Finished? Plus: Ike Ibeabuchi, De La Hoya-Camacho preview, Frankie Conley, Hall of Fame, gloves,

Jan. 1998: Give This Man His Due! If You Can't Respect Oscar ... You Can't Respect Anyone! Plus: Sanchez-Mayweather, Morales-Zaragoza, Lucia Rijker, Marvin Johnson, characters.

Feb. 1998: Welter-Skelter! The Hottest Division In Boxing. Plus: Lewis-Golota, Olympic update, Art Shires, boxing I.Q.

March 1998 (92-Page Special): Into The Millennium With The Real Deal: The Ring's Timeline For Evander Holyfield. Plus: Hernandez-Hernandez, Briggs-Foreman, 10 champs recall "The Day I Won The Title," Johnny Thompson.

April 1998: Evander Holyfield: The Ring's Fighter Of The Year (Again!). Plus: Yory Boy Campas, Mullings-Norris, Pinkey Mitchell, Holyfield Q & A, Hamed-Kelley, Oscar De La Hoya.

June 1998 (92-Page Special): The State Of The Game. Plus: Tyson-King, David Reid, Bernard Hopkins, Ken Norton.

July 1998: Holyfield ... Tapia ... Hamed ... Jones ... Trinidad ... De La Hoya: Who Will Be The First To Fall? Plus: Magic Johnson, Chavez-Gonzalez & Lopez-Alvarez, underappreciated boxers.

Aug. 1998: Lennox Lewis: No Holyfield, No Glory. Plus: Felix Trinidad, Pat & Mike McMurtry, Chris Byrd, unbreakable records, contenders & pretenders.

Sept. 1998 (92-Page Special): This Man's Not Unbeatable! Five Top Trainers Reveal How To Solve The Hamed Puzzle. Plus: John Tate, Freddie Norwood, Andrew Golota, Roy Jones, 12 greatest finishes.

Oct. 1998: Really Hard Punch ... Really Soft Lips: Oscar Makes Legs Quiver In And Out Of The Ring. Plus: Hector Camacho Jr., Mayweather-Hernandez preview, *Tuesday Night Fights.*

Jan. 1999: Sugar Shane Mosley: The Sweet Tradition Continues. Plus: Evander Holyfield, Julio Cesar Chavez, Erik Morales, Ray "Windmill" White.

Feb. 1999: 1999! It's Gonna Be A Great Year For Boxing. Plus: Mike Tyson, Foreman-Holmes, David Reid, Eric Morel, Richie Mitchell, quitters.

March 1999: De La Hoya vs. Quartey: Does Bazooka Have The Weapons To Shoot Down Oscar? Plus: Sugar Shane Mosley, Lopez-Alvarez II, Roy Jones, Coley Wallace.

April 1999 (92-Page Special): Fighter Of The Year: Floyd Mayweather Jr.: "He's So Good, It's Scary!" Plus: Fernando Vargas, James Page, Luisito Espinosa, Robinson-Gatti II, Archie Moore, Carlos Oritz, 1998 diary.

May 1999: Is It All Over For Tyson? Plus: Terry Norris, Vinny Pazienza, Jesus Pimental, stoppages, mandatories.

June 1999: The Fans Have Spoken: Results Of The Ring Readers' Poll. Plus: Michael Grant, De La Hoya-Quartey, Antwun Echols, Ted Lowry.

July 1999 (92-Page Special): The State Of The Game. Plus: Holyfield-Lewis, Felix Trinidad, Stevie Johnston, Emile Griffith, Phil Zwick.

Aug. 1999: Candidates For Greatness: Can Anyone Fill The Heavyweight Void? Plus: Tim Austin, Naseem Hamed, Oscar De La Hoya, Max Schmeling, Holyfield-Lewis.

Sept. 1999: Taking Stock In The Fight Game: Who's Hot, Who's Not. Plus: Tony Ayala, Keith Holmes, Denny & Phil Moyer, scoring.

Oct. 1999 (92-Page Special): Felix & Oscar Go To War! Who's Going To Prevail In The Welter Shootout? Plus: Floyd Mayweather, Harry Simon, Omar Sheika, Al Andrews, 20 greatest fighters of 20th century.

Dec. 1999: Insiders' Analysis: Can Roy Jones Chop Down The Best Heavyweights? Plus: Ike Ibeabuchi, David Reid, David Tua, Carmen Basilio, Johnny Summerlin.

Holiday 1999 (92-Page Special): Heavyweight Showdowns! Holyfield vs. Lewis II, Grant vs. Golota. Plus: Francois Botha, Arturo Gatti, Michael Carbajal, Rocky Marciano, Lou Filippo.

Jan. 2000: What Does Trinidad's Victory Over Oscar Mean? Plus: Floyd Mayweather, Paul Spadafora, Ralph Dupas, boxing media.

March 2000: Lennox Lewis: The Champ For The Millennium ... Or Just For The Moment? Plus: Oleg Maskaev, Main Events, Derrick Jefferson, Jerry Buss, IBF scandal.

April 2000 (92-Page Special): Paulie Ayala—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Evander Holyfield, Grant-Golota, Stephan Johnson, Gaspar Ortega, Kitten Hayward, writers' favorite fights.

May 2000: Lennox Lewis Will Quit ... Or Get Knocked Out, By Michael Grant. Plus: Roy Jones, Quartey-Vargas preview, Garth Panter, best chins, boxing movies.

June 2000: The Honors Keep Coming! Lenox Lewis Receives The Undisputed Ring Belt. Plus: Roy Jones, Vernon Forrest, Teddy Atlas, Mike Tyson, Don Fullmer.

July 2000 (92-Page Special): The State Of The Game. Plus: Felix Trinidad, Zab Judah, Oscar De La Hoya, Barrera-Morales, Ken Buchanan, Beau Jack, Eric Bottjer.

Aug. 2000: Hamed! And The Men Who Want To Kick His Naz! Plus: David Reid, James Prince, Anthony Fletcher, Micky Ward, final beatings, white hopes.

Sept. 2000: A New Look At Lennox Lewis: Is He An All-Time Great? Plus: Winky Wright, Michael Moorer, De La Hoya & Vargas, Eddie McGoorty.

Oct. 2000 (92-Page Special): Move Up Or Shut Up! We're Sick Of Roy Jones' Heavyweight Tease. Plus: Lennox Lewis, Tapia & Romero, Hasim Rahman, Dwight Qawi, Al Palzer, fight films, best refs. (ALL-COLOR BEGINNING WITH THE DECEMBER 2000 ISSUE)

Dec. 2000: The Hell With Tyson—Tua Is The Man Who Could Beat Lewis. Plus: Mike Tyson, Felix Trinidad, Wladimir Klitschko, Trilla in Manila, U.S. vs. World, Toxey Hall.

Jan. 2001 (108-Page Extra): Trinidad's Destiny: Jones Is On His Mind ... But Vargas Is In His Face! Plus: Naseem Hamed, Tszyu-Judah, Evander Holyfield, Willie Bean, 20 greatest middleweights.

Feb. 2001: It's Not Over For Oscar: The Ring's Five-Step Recovery Plan. Plus: Bob Arum, Dingaan Thobela, Hernandez brothers, U.S. Olympic team, future pound-for-pounders.

March 2001 (108-Page Extra): Tyson! Forget About Retirement ... A Title Shot Awaits! Plus: Ayala-Tapia II, Audley Harrison, Chris Byrd, Kirk Johnson, Julio Cesar Chavez, Boone Kirkman, 12 most exciting rounds.

April 2001: A New Beginning ... A New Middle: Felix Trinidad Is Ready To Conquer Another Division! Plus: Shane Mosley, Lennox Lewis, Paul Andrews, boxing business.

May 2001 (108-Page Extra): Felix Trinidad—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Year-end awards, Barrera-Hamed preview, Bernard Hopkins, Joey Archer.

June 2001: Pretty Boy Floyd: Superstar Or Superbrat? Plus: Lewis vs. greats, 2000 Olympians, Henry Hall, rematches we'd like to see.

July 2001 (108-Page Extra): The State Of The Game. Plus: Zab Judah, John Ruiz, Andrew Lewis, Mark Johnson, British boxing.

Aug. 2001: Rocking The World! What Rahman's Victory Means To Boxing. Plus: Barrera-Hamed, Oscar De La Hoya, Mount Whitaker, *Friday Night Fights.*

Sept. 2001 (108-Page Extra): Exclusive Ring Interview—Hasim Rahman: "Nobody's Taking My Titles!" Plus: 20 all-time greatest lightweights, Pat Valentino, Hopkins & King, Jones & Arum.

Oct. 2001: Trinidad vs. Hopkins: Middleweight Unification Superfight Analysis & Predictions. Plus: Emanuel Steward, Joe Calzaghe, Ali's opponents, Rahman & King.

Dec. 2001: The Rock Promises Another Shock! "I'm Gonna Knock Lennox Out Again!" Plus: David Reid, Jones-Gonzalez, McCline-Grant, Jackie Graves, ring deaths.

Jan. 2002 (108-Page Extra): Oscar Feeds His Critics: Did He Chicken Out Against Vargas? Plus: Wladimir Klitschko, Chris Byrd, 20 greatest feather-weights, "Caveman" Bob Moha.

March 2002 (108-Page Extra): Is Tyson Ready To Regain The Title? Plus: Kostya Tszyu, Floyd Mayweather, Bernard Hopkins, Eddie Futch, fitness, ahead for 2002.

May 2002 (108-Page Extra): Bernard Hopkins—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Year-end awards, Holyfield-Ruiz III, 2000 Olympians, Eric Harding, "Silent" Hairston.

June 2002: Lennox Lewis: I'll End The Tyson "Freak Show!" Plus: Forrest-Mosley, Freitas-Casamayor, De La Hoya & Vargas, Hagler & Leonard.

July 2002 (108-Page Extra): Exclusive Preview: The Oscar-Fernando Hatefest. Plus: Hopkins & Monzon, Francisco Bojado, Buddy McGirt, Lionel Rose, State of the Game.

Aug. 2002: Lewis vs. Tyson: Who Will Win ... And What Happens Next. Plus: Michael Moorer, Jeff Fenech, Charley Parham, Rafael & Juan Manuel Marquez.

Sept. 2002 (108-Page Extra): Vernon Forrest—Next Step In The Master Plan: End Mosley's Career. Plus: Sugar Ray Leonard, Roberto Duran, Ricardo Mayorga, 20 greatest lightweights.

Oct. 2002: Tito' Back ... And He's "Going To Make Hopkins Pay!" Plus: Ward-Gatti, Bouie Fisher, controversial scoring, ruining prospects.

Nov. 2002 (108-Page Extra): Monster Mashed! Can A New Tyson Emerge From The Rubble? Plus: The Ring 100, Evander Holyfield, Don King, Billy Joiner, junior welters.

Dec. 2002: Ward & Gatti Look To Hit Another Grand Slam! Plus: Forrest-Mosley II, Barrera-Morales II, Manny Pacquiao, Tim Austin, Nino Benvenuti, Mark Taffet.

Jan. 2003 (108-Page Extra): The Golden Boy Proves His Manhood: Is Oscar De La Hoya' Prime Just Beginning? Plus: Michael Grant, David Tua, previews of Morales-Ayala and Ward-Gatti II, overrated/underrated.

Feb. 2003: The Resurrection Of A Warrior: Cam Evander Holyfield Recapture The Glory Of His Youth? Also: Floyd Mayweather Sr., Nate Campbell, Tom & Peter McNeeley, boxing finances, pound-for-pound.

March 2003 (108-Page Extra): Hamed ... Morales ... Tapia: Barrera Has Punched His Ticket To The Hall Of Fame. Also: Joe Mesi, Ricardo Lopez, Pipino Cuevas, alphabet tales, what's ahead for '03.

April 2003: Gatti Has His Ducks In A Row: A New Woman And A New Trainer Put The "Art" Back In Arturo. *Also: Barrera-Morales, Roy Jones, Phillip Ndou & Silence Mabuza, Laila Ali, Gorilla Jones,*

May 2003 (108-Page Extra): Ali ... Leonard ... Tyson ... Klitschko? Also: Year-end awards, Chris Byrd, Lupe Pintor, Maxie Rosenbloom.

June 2003: Exclusive! The Ring Grills George Foreman. Also: Kostya Tszyu, Ricardo Mayorga, Diego Corrales, Tommy Loughran.

July 2003 (108-Page Extra): Now What, Roy? How Jones Matches Up Against The Heavyweight Elite. Also: Mike Tyson, Marquez Brothers, Ricardo Williams, Tony Zale.

Aug. 2003: The Ring Unscrambles The Heavyweight Mess. Also: Bernard Hopkins, Scott Harrison, Billy Warren, Latino revolution, cups.

Sept. 2003 (108-Page Extra): Oscar At 30: Forget About Retirement ... He Has Revenge On His Mind. Also: Mayorga-Forrest II preview, James Toney, Barney Ross, HBO, report cards.

Oct. 2003: James Toney vs. Bernard Hopkins: The Ghost Of Superfights Past. Also: De La Hoya-Mosley II preview, Jermain Taylor, Sharmba Mitchell, biggest hearts.

Nov. 2003 (108-Page Extra): Healing And Hungry: Vitali Klitschko—Is He The Man To Retire Lewis? Also: Gatti-Ward III, Holyfield-Toney, Dominick Guinn, Lee Roy Murphy, The Ring 100.

Dec. 2003: The Craziest Man In The Sport: Mayorga Lights Up Boxing. Also: Oscar De La Hoya, Fernando Vargas, Manuel Medina, Curtis Cokes, Rasheem Brown.

Jan. 2004 (108-Page Extra): Shane-Oscar II: The 10 Questions You Want Answered! Also: Laila Ali, Mark Johnson, Jimmy McClarnin, The Ring championship, broke boxers, division-by-division analysis.

Feb. 2004: James Toney Told You So! "Lights Out" Is A Heavyweight Force. Also: Mosley-De La Hoya II, CompuBox, Yaqui Lopez, Ishme Smith.

March 2004 (108-Page Extra): Audley Harrison, Dominick Guinn, Joe Mesi: Who Will Be The Next Star Heavyweight? Also: Floyd Mayweather, Arturo Gatti, Erik Morales, what's ahead for 2004.

April 2004: Antonio Tarver: "It's Not About Roy Jones Anymore." Also: Pacquiao-Barrera, Floyd Mayweather, all punch/no chin, Rinty Monaghan.

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☐ Dec/96
All 5 $22

☐ Jun/97
☐ Oct/97
☐ Nov/97
All 3 $14

☐ Jan/98
☐ Feb/98
☐ Mar/98
☐ Apr/98
☐ Jun/98
☐ Jul/98
☐ Aug/98
☐ Sep/98
☐ Oct/98
All 9 $34

vJan/99
☐ Feb/99
☐ Mar/99
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☐ Oct/99
☐ Dec/99
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All 12 $43

☐ Jan/00
☐ Mar/00
☐ Apr/00
☐ May/00
☐ Jun/00

☐ Jul/00
☐ Aug/00
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☐ Oct/00
☐ Dec/00
All 10 $37

☐ Jan/01
☐ Feb/01
☐ Mar/01
☐ Apr/01
☐ May/01
☐ Jun/01
☐ Jul/01
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☐ Oct/01
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All 11 $40

☐ Jan/02
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☐ Jul/02
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☐ Nov/02
☐ Dec/02
All 10 $37

☐ Jan/03
☐ Feb/03
☐ Mar/03
☐ Apr/03
☐ May/03
☐ Jun/03
☐ Jul/03
☐ Aug/03
☐ Sep/03
☐ Oct/03
☐ Nov/03
☐ Dec/03
All 12 $43

vJan/04
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☐ Mar/04
☐ Apr/04
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6593/12-03

Alphabet Ratings

The Rankings of Boxing's Three International Governing Bodies

WBA RATINGS

(Ratings as of October 2003)

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Champ: Roy Jones (USA)

1. Hasim Rahman (USA)
2. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
3. Corrie Sanders (SA)
4. John Ruiz (USA)
5. Mike Tyson (USA)
6. Wladimir Klitschko (UKR)
7. David Tua (NZ)
8. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
9. Joe Mesi (USA)
10. Nicolay Valuev (RUS)
11. Lamon Brewster (USA)
12. Evander Holyfield (USA)

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Champ: Jean Marc Mormeck (FRA)

1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Virgil Hill (USA)
4. O'Neil Bell (USA)
5. Luis Pineda (PAN)
6. Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)
7. Valery Brudov (RUS)
8. Daniel Rowsell (AUSTRL)
9. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
10. Thomas Hansvoll (NOR)
11. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
12. Alexander Petkovic (GER)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS

Champ: Silvio Branco (ITA)

1. Dariusz Michalczewski (GER)
2. Lou Del Valle (USA)
3. Mehdi Sahnoune (FRA)
4. Bruno Girard (FRA)
5. David Telesco (USA)
6. George Jones (USA)
7. Paul Briggs (AUSTRL)
8. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
9. Montell Griffin (USA)
10. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
11. Stipe Drews (CRO)
12. Laudelino Barrios (BRA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Unified Champ: Sven Ottke (GER)
Champ: Anthony Mundine (AUSTRL)

1. Vacant
2. Manuel Siaca (PR)
3. Mads Larsen (DEN)
4. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
5. Eric Lucas (CAN)
6. Antwun Echols (USA)
7. Byron Mitchell (USA)
8. Brian Magee (GB)
9. Danilo Haussler (GER)
10. Nordin Ben-Salah (NETH)
11. Charles Brewer (USA)
12. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Unified Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
Champ: William Joppy (USA)

1. Vacant
2. Bert Schenk (GER)
3. Robert Allen (USA)
4. Maselino Masoe (AUSTRL)
5. Evans Ashira (DEN)
6. Howard Eastman (GB)
7. Kingsley Ikeke (NIG)
8. Jermain Taylor (USA)
9. Wayne Alexander (GB)
10. Marcos Silvano Diaz (ARG)
11. Kelly Pavlik (USA)
12. Raymond Joval (NETH)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS

Unified Champ: Shane Mosley (USA)
Champ: Alejandro T. Garcia (MEX)

1. Vacant
2. Travis Simms (USA)
3. Oscar De La Hoya (USA)
4. Fernando Vargas (USA)
5. Santiago Samaniego (PAN)
6. J.C. Candelo (COL)
7. Rhoshii Wells (USA)
8. Mamadou Thiam (FRA)
9. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
10. Kassim Ouma (GHA)
11. Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)
12. Mikael Rask (DEN)

WELTERWEIGHTS

Unified Champ: Ricardo Mayorga (CR)
Champ: Jose Rivera (USA)

1. Vacant
2. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
3. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
4. Vernon Forrest (USA)
5. Michael Trabant (GER)
6. James Hare (GB)
7. Kermit Cintron (PR)
8. Farhad Bakirov (UZB)
9. Teddy Reid (USA)
10. Chris Smith (USA)
11. Hwanyung Park (KOR)
12. Alpaslan Aguzum (TUR)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS

Unified Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
Champ: Vivian Harris (GUY)

1. Miguel Cotto (PR)
2. Ricky Hatton (GB)
3. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
4. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
5. Arturo Gatti (USA)
6. Masakazu Satake (JAP)
7. Souleyman M'Baye (FRA)
8. Randall Bailey (USA)
9. Diobelys Hurtado (CUB)
10. Gianluca Branco (ITA)
11. Andreas Kotelnik (GER)
12. Terrance Cauthen (USA)

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Champ: Vacant

1. Miguel Callist (PAN)
2. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
3. Juan Lazcano (USA)
4. Javier Jauregui (MEX)
5. Lakva Sim (MON)
6. Prawet Singwangcha (THAI)
7. Courtney Burton (USA)
8. Michael Clark (USA)
9. Julio Diaz (MEX)
10. Steve Johnston (USA)
11. Billy Irwin (CAN)
12. Juan Diaz (USA)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS

Unified Champ: Acelino Freitas (BRA)
Champ: Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)

1. Joel Casamayor (CUB)
2. Randy Suico (PHIL)
3. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
4. Janos Nagy (HUN)
5. Michael Gomez (GB)
6. Julio Pablo Chacon (ARG)
7. Nobuhito Honmo (JAP)
8. Nate Campbell (USA)
9. Mike Anchondo (USA)
10. Diego Corrales (USA)
11. Steve Forbes (USA)
12. Edwin Valero (VEN)

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Unified Champ: Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
Champ: Chris John (INDO)

1. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
2. Injin Chi (KOR)
3. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
4. Derrick Gainer (USA)
5. Michael Brodie (GB)
6. Spend Abazi (DEN)
7. Victor Polo (COL)
8. Oscar Leon (COL)
9. William Abelyan (ARM)
10. Zahir Raheem (USA)
11. Orlando Salido (MEX)
12. Cyril Thomas (FRA)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS

Champ: Mahyar Monshipour (FRA)

1. Vacant
2. Yoddamrong Sithyodthong (THAI)
3. Somsak Sithchachawan (THAI)
4. Tim Austin (USA)
5. Osamu Sato (JAP)
6. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
7. Yober Ortega (VEN)
8. Jose Rojas (VEN)
9. Paulie Ayala (USA)
10. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
11. Alejandro Barrera (MEX)
12. Shoji Kimura (JAP)

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Champ: Johnny Bredahl (DEN)

1. Hideki Todaka (JAP)
2. Poongsawat Krachingdaen (THAI)
3. Sornpichai Kratingdaeng (THAI)
4. Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)
5. Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)
6. Diego Morales (MEX)
7. Leo Gamez (VEN)
8. Mauricio Martinez (PAN)
9. Nobuaki Naka (JAP)
10. Daniel Ponce DeLeon (MEX)
11. Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)
12. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS

Champ: Alexander Munoz (VEN)

1. Vacant
2. Rogelio Galicia (PHIL)
3. Luis Bolano (COL)
4. Masaki Kawabata (JAP)
5. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
6. Fernando Montiel (MEX)
7. Jose Navarro (USA)
8. Hideyasu Ishihara (JAP)
9. Martin Castillo (MEX)
10. Ricardo Cordova (PAN)
11. Gabula Vabaza (SA)
12. Cyril Bellanger (FRA)

FLYWEIGHTS

Champ: Eric Morel (USA)

1. Lorenzo Parra (VEN)
2. Takefumi Sakata (JAP)
3. Brahim Asloum (FRA)
4. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
5. Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)
6. Tomas Rojas (MEX)
7. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
8. Mzukisi Sikali (SA)
9. Brian Viloria (USA)
10. Isidro Garcia (MEX)
11. Angel Priolo (COL)
12. Damaen Kelly (GB)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS

Champ: Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)

1. Vacant
2. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
3. Pichit C. Siriwat (THAI)
4. Edgar Velasquez (VEN)
5. Marvin Tampos (PHIL)
6. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
7. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
8. Mhikiza Myekeni (SA)
9. Tatsuo Hayashida (JAP)
10. Yosam Choi (KOR)
11. Alex Sanchez (PR)
12. Shingo Yamaguchi (JAP)

MINIMUMWEIGHTS

Champ: Noel Arambulet (VEN)

1. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
2. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
3. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
4. Sithembele Kibiti (SA)
5. Genki Ohnaka (JAP)
6. Eriberto Gijon (PHIL)
7. Pornsawan Pramuk (THAI)
8. Yutaka Niida (JAP)
9. Isaac Bustos (MEX)
10. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
11. Keitaro Hoshino (JAP)
12. Juan Landaeta (VEN)

WBC RATINGS

(Ratings as of December 2003)

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Champ: Lennox Lewis (GB)

1. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
2. Corrie Sanders (SA)
3. David Tua (NZ)
4. Joe Mesi (USA)
5. Mike Tyson (USA)
6. Juan Carlos Gomez (CUB)
7. Fres Oquendo (USA)
8. James Toney (USA)
9. Wladimir Klitschko (UKR)
10. Lamon Brewster (USA)
11. Jameel McCline (USA)
12. Dominick Guinn (USA)
13. Faruq Saleem (USA)
14. Eliecer Castillo (CUB)
15. Hasim Rahman (USA)
16. John Ruiz (USA)
17. Sinan Samil San (TUR)
18. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
19. Oliver McCall (USA)
20. Henry Akinwande (NIG)
21. Lance Whitaker (USA)
22. Danny Williams (GB)
23. Evander Holyfield (USA)
24. Jeremy Williams (USA)
25. Luan Krasniqi (GER)
26. Saul Montana (MEX)
27. Samuel Peter (NIG)
28. Marcelo Dominguez (ARG)
29. Peter Okhello (UGA)
30. Dimitry Bakhtov (KAZ)

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Champ: Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)

1. O'Neil Bell (USA)
2. Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)
3. Pietro Aurino (ITA)
4. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
5. Luis Andres Pineda (PAN)
6. Dale Brown (CAN)
7. Rydell Booker (USA)
8. Rudiger May (GER)
9. Pavel Melkomian (RUS)
10. Krysztov Wlodarczyk (POL)
11. Sebastiaan Rothman (SA)
12. Glen Kelly (AUSTRL)
13. Virgil Hill (USA)
14. Kelvin Davis (USA)
15. Alexander Petkovic (GER)
16. Richard LaMontagne (USA)
17. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
18. Vincenzo Rossitto (ITA)
19. Louis Azille (DR)
20. Daniel Rowsell (AUSTRL)
21. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
22. Ezra Sellers (USA)
23. Thomas Hansvoll (NOR)
24. Michael Simms (USA)
25. Mark Hobson (GB)
26. Felix Cora (USA)
27. Valery Brudov (RUS)
28. Jorge Kahwagi (MEX)
29. Madjid Zaim (FRA)
30. Cecil McKenzie (USA)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS

Champ: Roy Jones (USA)

1. Antonio Tarver (USA)
2. Paul Briggs (AUSTRL)
3. Stipe Drews (CRO)
4. Dariusz Michalczewski (GER)
5. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
6. Tomasz Adamek (POL)
7. Elvir Muriqi (ALB)
8. Jesus Ruiz (MEX)
9. Montell Griffin (USA)
10. George Jones (USA)
11. Eric Harding (USA)
12. Kamel Amrane (FRA)
13. Laudelino Barros (BRA)
14. Donnell Wiggins (USA)
15. Zsolt Erdei (HUN)
16. Glencoffe Johnson (USA)
17. Matthew Barney (GB)
18. Darren Corbett (IRE)
19. Mehdi Sahnoune (FRA)
20. Orlando Rivera (PR)
21. Tony Oakey (GB)
22. Peter Oboh (GB)
23. Derrick Harmon (USA)
24. Robert Stieglitz (GER)
25. Hugo Garay (ARG)
26. Alejandro Lakatus (ROM)
27. Richard Hall (JAM)
28. Michael Rush (USA)
29. Earl Morais (SA)
30. Manny Siaca (PR)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Champ: Markus Beyer (GER)

1. Eric Lucas (CAN)
2. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
3. Mads Larsen (DEN)
4. Danny Green (AUSTRL)
5. Danilo Haussler (GER)
6. Charles Brewer (USA)
7. Jeff Lacy (USA)
8. Yoshinori Nishizawa (JAP)
9. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
10. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)
11. Brian Magee (GB)
12. Scott Pemberton (USA)
13. Antwun Echols (USA)
14. Robin Reid (GB)
15. Andre Thysse (SA)
16. Kabary Salem (EGY)
17. Rudy Markussen (DEN)
18. Otis Grant (CAN)
19. Henry Porras (CR)
20. Mario Veit (GER)
21. Jean Paul Mendy (FRA)
22. Victor Oganov (RUS)
23. Enrique Ornelas (USA)
24. Willie Stewart (USA)
25. Librado Andrade (USA)
26. Carmine Tufano (USA)
27. Charles Adamu (GHA)
28. Oscar Bravo (USA)
29. Vitaly Tsypko (UKR)
30. Jackson Chanet (FRA)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)

1. Howard Eastman (GB)
2. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
3. Jermain Taylor (USA)
4. Kuvanych Toygonbayev (UZB)
5. Eric Mitchell (USA)
6. Evans Ashira (KEN)
7. Kingsley Ikeke (CAN)
8. Sam Soliman (AUSTRL)
9. Sergey Tatevosyan (RUS)
10. Robert Allen (USA)
11. Raymond Joval (HOL)
12. Wayne Alexander (GB)
13. Quentin Smith (USA)
14. Epifanio Mendoza (COL)
15. Jorge Sendra (SPA)
16. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)
17. Bert Schenk (GER)
18. Tokunbo Olajide (CAN)
19. Mariano Carrera (ARG)
20. Kelly Pavlik (USA)
21. Yoshinori Araki (JAP)
22. Morrade Hakkar (FRA)
23. Chad Dawson (USA)
24. Jerry Elliott (NIG)
25. Tokutaro Toyozumi (JAP)
26. Marcos Silvano Diaz (ARG)
27. Jesse Brinkley (USA)
28. Anthony Bonsante (USA)
29. James Obedi Toney (GHA)
30. Troy Rowland (USA)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS

Champ: Shane Mosley (USA)
Interim Champ: Javier Castillejo (SPA)

1. Oscar De La Hoya (USA)
2. Fernando Vargas (USA)
3. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
4. Kassim Ouma (USA)
5. Alex Bunema (USA)
6. J.C. Candelo (COL)
7. Sergio Martinez (ARG)
8. Sergei Dzindziruk (UKR)
9. Kofi Jantuah (GHA)
10. Marco Antonio Rubio (MEX)
11. Christophe Canclaux (FRA)
12. Raul Marquez (USA)
13. Mehrdud Takaloo (GB)
14. Toshiharu Kaneyama (JAP)
15. Aslan Kodzoev (RUS)
16. Jamie Moore (GB)
17. Fitz Vanderpool (CAN)
18. Akira Ohigashi (JAP)
19. Mihaly Kotai (HUN)
20. Verno Phillips (USA)
21. Michael Rask (DEN)
22. Rodney Jones (USA)
23. Julio Garcia (CUB)
24. Rhoshii Wells (USA)
25. Nobuhiro Hishida (JAP)
26. Richard Williams (GB)
27. Carlos Bojorquez (USA)
28. Joachim Alcine (CAN)
29. Guillermo Saputo (ARG)
30. Yuri Foreman (USA)

WELTERWEIGHTS

Champ: Ricardo Mayorga (NIC)

1. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
2. Vernon Forrest (USA)
3. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
4. Manuel Gomez (MEX)
5. Jose Luis Cruz (MEX)
6. Miguel Rodriguez (MEX)
7. Teddy Reid (USA)
8. Rafael Pineda (COL)
9. Hiroshi Watanabe (JAP)
10. Alpaslam Aguzum (TUR)
11. Jawaid Khaliq (GB)
12. Michel Trabant (GER)
13. Frederic Klose (FRA)
14. Michele Piccirillo (ITA)
15. Christian Bladt (DEN)
16. Ishe Smith (USA)
17. Jorge Lujan (ARG)
18. Joseph Makaringe (SA)
19. Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)
20. Rev Santillan (PHIL)
21. Ernesto Carmona (MEX)
22. Randall Bailey (USA)
23. James Hare (GB)
24. Kermit Cintron (USA)
25. Michael Santos (MEX)
26. Michele Orlando (ITA)
27. Farkhad Bakirov (UZB)
28. Chris Smith (USA)
29. Christopher Henry (BAR)
30. Jacek Bielski (POL)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS

Emeritus Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)

1. Gianluca Branco (ITA)
2. Arturo Gatti (CAN)
3. Ricky Hatton (GB)
4. Leonard Dorin (CAN)
5. Paul Spadafora (USA)
6. Miguel Cotto (PR)
7. Masakazu Satake (JAP)
8. James Leija (USA)
9. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
10. Francisco Bojado (MEX)
11. Junior Witter (GB)
12. Terrance Cauthen (USA)

13. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
14. Juan Valenzuela (MEX)
15. Kelson Pinto (BRA)
16. Omar Weis (ARG)
17. Carlos Maussa (COL)
18. DeMarcus Corley (USA)
19. Wilfredo Vilches (ARG)
20. Hector Camacho Jr. (PR)
21. Michael Stewart (USA)
22. Victor Kpadenue (GHA)
23. Alvaro Aguilar (MEX)
24. Juan Carlos Rodriguez (MEX)
25. Eamonn Magee (GB)
26. Andreas Kotelnik (UKR)
27. Cesar Bazan (MEX)
28. Eduardo Gomez (MEX)
29. Muhammad Abdullaev (UZB)
30. Salvatore Battaglia (ITA)

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Champ: Floyd Mayweather (USA)

1. Juan Lazcano (USA)
2. Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)
3. Kengo Nagashima (JAP)
4. Juan Diaz (MEX)
5. Phillip Ndou (SA)
6. Steve Johnston (USA)
7. Julio Diaz (USA)
8. Victoriano Damian Sosa (DR)
9. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
10. Yuri Romanov (UKR)
11. Jason Cook (GB)
12. Stefano Zoff (ITA)
13. Matt Zegan (POL)
14. Michael Clark (USA)
15. Michele Delli Paoli (ITA)
16. Aldo Rios (ARG)
17. Dennis Laurente (PHIL)
18. Cristian Bejarano (MEX)
19. David Burke (GB)
20. Alex Trujillo (PR)
21. Lamar Murphy (USA)
22. Graham Earl (GB)
23. Antonio Pitalua (COL)
24. Ricardo Silva (ARG)
25. Billy Irwin (CAN)
26. Eleazar Contreras (USA)
27. Courtney Burton (USA)
28. Ameth Diaz (PAN)
29. Steve Quinonez (USA)
30. Rolando Reyes (USA)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS

Champ: Jesus Chavez (USA)

1. Mzonke Fana (SA)
2. Randy Suico (PHIL)
3. Joel Casamayor (CUB)
4. Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)
5. Boris Sinitsin (RUS)
6. Zahir Raheem (USA)
7. Mike Anchondo (USA)
8. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
9. Nobuto Honmo (JAP)
10. Ryuhei Sugita (JAP)
11. Diego Corrales (USA)
12. Janos Nagy (HUN)
13. Julio Pablo Chacon (ARG)
14. Fernando Trejo (MEX)
15. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
16. Goyo Vargas (MEX)
17. Justin Juuko (UGA)
18. Nate Campbell (USA)
19. Orlando Salido (MEX)
20. Daniel Dominguez (MEX)
21. Miguel Angel Huerta (MEX)
22. Steve Luevano (USA)
23. Michael Gomez (GB)
24. Cesar Soriano (MEX)
25. Jose Cotto (PR)
26. Craig Docherty (GB)
27. Manuel Bocanegra (MEX)
28. Alex Arthur (GB)
29. Daniel Attah (NIG)
30. Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Emeritus Champ: Erik Morales (MEX)

1. Injin Chi (KOR)
2. Michael Brodie (GB)
3. Manny Pacquiao (PHIL)
4. Rocky Juarez (USA)
5. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
6. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
7. Cyril Thomas (FRA)
8. William Abelyan (USA)
9. Spend Abazi (DEN)
10. Humberto Soto (MEX)
11. Hector Velazquez (MEX)
12. Guty Espadas (MEX)
13. Juan Carlos Ramirez (MEX)
14. Luis Fuente (MEX)
15. Osamu Sato (JAP)
16. Valdemir Pereira (BRA)
17. Whyber Garcia (PAN)
18. Jorge Solis (MEX)
19. Takalani Ndlovu (SA)
20. Derrick Gainer (USA)
21. Nicky Cook (GB)
22. Manuel Calvo (SPA)
23. Vuyani Bungu (SA)
24. Juan Gerardo Cabrera (ARG)
25. Wayne McCullough (IRE)
26. Ismael Gonzalez (MEX)
27. Fernando Velardez (MEX)
28. Dainoshin Kuma (JAP)
29. Eiichi Sugama (JAP)
30. Carlos Gamez (MEX)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS

Champ: Oscar Larios (MEX)

1. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
2. Israel Vazquez (MEX)
3. Napapol Kiattisakchocchoi (THAI)
4. Shigeru Nakazato (JAP)
5. Yoshikane Nakajima (JAP)
6. Jose Rojas (VEN)
7. Daniel Ponce (MEX)
8. Jimrex Jaca (PHIL)
9. Akihiro Kanai (JAP)
10. Paulie Ayala (USA)
11. Willie Jorrin (USA)
12. Jose Luis Valbuena (VEN)
13. David Donis (USA)
14. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
15. Jorge Linares (VEN)
16. Hector Julio Avila (DR)
17. Manabu Fukushima (JAP)
18. Kozo Ishii (JAP)
19. Art Simonyan (USA)
20. Seungsok Chae (KOR)
21. Masakazu Sugawara (JAP)
22. Junichi Watanabe (JAP)
23. Fernando Beltran Jr. (MEX)
24. Sergio Medina (ARG)
25. Cuauhtemoc Vargas (MEX)
26. Marcos Licona (MEX)
27. Pedrito Laurente (PHIL)
28. Esham Pickering (GB)
29. Masanori Sugita (JAP)
30. Eduardo Garcia (MEX)

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Champ: Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)

1. Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)
2. Diego Morales (MEX)
3. Genaro Garcia (USA)
4. Hozumi Hasegawa (JAP)
5. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)
6. Julio Zarate (MEX)
7. Jhonny Gonzalez (MEX)
8. Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)
9. Mauricio Martinez (PAN)
10. Vusi Malinga (SA)
11. David Guerault (FRA)
12. Noel Wilders (GB)
13. Tim Austin (USA)
14. Julio Cesar Avila (MEX)
15. Heriberto Ruiz (MEX)
16. Silence Mabuza (SA)
17. Khulile Makeba (SA)
18. Moises Castro (NIC)
19. Steve Molitor (CAN)
20. Saenghiran Lookbanyai (THAI)
21. Jorge Lacierva (MEX)
22. Pete Frissina (USA)
23. Hugo Dianzo (MEX)
24. Wladimir Sidorenko (UKR)
25. Miguel Angel Munguia (MEX)
26. Sasha Baktin (RUS)
27. Akihiko Nago (JAP)
28. Rogelio Galicia (PHIL)
29. Nathan Sting (AUSTRL)
30. Roger Gonzalez (MEX)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS

Champ: Masamori Tokuyama (JAP)

1. Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)
2. Jose Navarro (USA)
3. Malcolm Tunacao (PHIL)
4. Luis Bolano (COL)
5. Medgoen Singsurat (THAI)
6. Hideyasu Ishihara (JAP)
7. Reynaldo Hurtado (COL)
8. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
9. Fernando Montiel (MEX)
10. Martin Castillo (MEX)
11. Peter Culshaw (GB)
12. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
13. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)
14. Eiji Kojima (JAP)
15. Chatchai Sasakul (THAI)
16. Masaki Kawabata (JAP)
17. Ricardo Cordoba (PAN)
18. Felix Machado (VEN)
19. Oscar Andrade (MEX)
20. Sergio Perez (MEX)
21. Ivan Hernandez (MEX)
22. Jose Beranza (MEX)
23. Saen Sor Ploenchit (THAI)
24. Cyril Bellanger (FRA)
25. Shin Ogata (JAP)
26. Karim Quibir (SPA)
27. Jason Booth (GB)
28. Sergio Santillan (ARG)
29. Neddy Garcia (USA)
30. Alex Becerra (USA)

FLYWEIGHTS

Champ: Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)

1. Luis Maldonado (MEX)
2. Takefumi Sakata (JAP)
3. Noriyuki Komatsu (JAP)
4. Brian Viloria (USA)
5. Tomas Rojas (MEX)
6. Jair Jimenez (COL)
7. Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)
8. Lorenzo Parra (VEN)
9. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
10. Brahim Asloum (FRA)
11. Vic Darchinyan (AUSTRL)
12. Koji Koyama (JAP)
13. Masaki Nakanuma (JAP)
14. Diosdado Gabi (PHIL)
15. Angel Priolo (COL)
16. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
17. Daisuke Naito (JAP)
18. Damaen Kelly (GB)
19. Carlos Bouchan (MEX)
20. Antonio E. Medina (ARG)
21. Jose Lopez Bueno (SPA)
22. Randy Mangubat (PHIL)
23. Mimoun Chent (FRA)
24. Steffen Norskov (DEN)
25. Yusuke Morishima (JAP)
26. Julio Ler (ARG)
27. Gabriel Elizondo (USA)
28. Jose Araiza (MEX)
29. Luis Angel Martinez (MEX)
30. Atsushi Mando (JAP)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS

Champ: Jorge Arce (MEX)

1. Juanito Rubillar (PHIL)
2. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
3. Roberto Vazquez (PAN)
4. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
5. Tatsuo Hayashida (JAP)
6. Manuel Vargas (MEX)
7. Shingo Yamaguchi (JAP)
8. Masato Hatakeyama (JAP)
9. Jesus Martinez (MEX)
10. Ulises Solis (MEX)
11. Yosam Choi (KOR)
12. Marvin Tampos (PHIL)
13. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
14. Sarikalek O. Eakarin (THAI)
15. Hugo Ramirez (MEX)
16. Omar Nino (MEX)
17. Rafael Lozano (SPA)
18. Monelisi Myekeni (SA)
19. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
20. Hugo Cazares (MEX)
21. Nerys Espinoza (NIC)
22. Carlos Fajardo (NIC)
23. Javier Lagos (MEX)
24. Juan Centeno (NIC)
25. Bert Batawang (PHIL)
26. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
27. Ernesto Castro (NIC)
28. Jose Lopez (PR)
29. Angelo Dottin (PAN)
30. Nobuaki Masuda (JAP)

STRAWWEIGHTS

Champ: Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)

1. Isaac Bustos (MEX)
2. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
3. Eagle Akakura (JAP)
4. Heriberto Gijon (PHIL)
5. Roberto Leyva (MEX)
6. Satoshi Kogumasaka (JAP)
7. Mohamed Rachman (INDO)
8. Juan Palacios (NIC)
9. Sithembele Kibiti (SA)
10. Genki Ohnaka (JAP)
11. Edgar Cardenas (MEX)
12. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
13. Oledong Sithsanerchai (THAI)
14. Armand de la Cruz (PHIL)
15. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
16. Lorenzo Trejo (MEX)
17. Omar Soto (MEX)
18. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
19. Sizwe Sinyabi (SA)
20. Namchai Ratanachaigym (THAI)
21. Pornsawan Porpramook (THAI)
22. Iwan Key (INDO)
23. Teruo Misawa (JAP)
24. Ricardo San Martin (MEX)
25. Gerardo Verde (MEX)
26. Francisco Rosas (MEX)
27. Juan Landaeta (VEN)
28. Makoto Suzuki (JAP)
29. Nkosinathi Joyi (SA)
30. Shunsuke Nagao (JAP)

IBF RATINGS

(Ratings as of November 2003)

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Champ: Chris Byrd (USA)

1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. David Tua (NZ)
4. Fres Oquendo (USA)
5. Hasim Rahman (USA)
6. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
7. Jameel McCline (USA)
8. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
9. Wladimir Klitschko (UKR)
10. John Ruiz (USA)
11. Evander Holyfield (USA)
12. Mike Tyson (USA)

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Champ: James Toney (USA)

1. Kelvin Davis (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)
4. Ezra Sellers (USA)
5. Virgil Hill (USA)
6. O'Neil Bell (USA)
7. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
8. Alex Petkovic (RUS)
9. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
10. Dale Brown (CAN)
11. Louis Azille (USA)
12. Ravea Springs (USA)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS

Champ: Vacant

1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Clinton Woods (GB)
4. Antonio Tarver (USA)
5. Glencoffe Johnson (USA)
6. Montell Griffin (USA)
7. Paul Briggs (AUSTRL)
8. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
9. Dariusz Michalczewski (POL)
10. Richard Hall (USA)
11. George Jones (USA)
12. Stipe Drews (CRO)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Champ: Sven Ottke (GER)

1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Mads Larsen (DEN)
4. Charles Brewer (USA)
5. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)
6. Danilo Haussler (GER)
7. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
8. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
9. Jeff Lacy (USA)
10. Mario Veit (GER)
11. Byron Mitchell (USA)
12. Antwun Echols (USA)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)

1. Robert Allen (USA)
2. Raymond Joval (HOL)
3. Howard Eastman (GB)
4. Evans Ashira (GUY)
5. Bert Schenk (GER)
6. Derrell Coley (USA)
7. Jermain Taylor (USA)
8. Bea Diallo (LIB)
9. Sam Soliman (AUSTRL)
10. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
11. Hector Velazco (ARG)
12. Aaron Mitchell (USA)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Champ: Winky Wright (USA)

1. Kassim Ouma (USA)
2. J.C. Candelo (USA)
3. Verno Phillips (USA)
4. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
5. Vernon Forrest (USA)
6. Angel Hernandez (USA)
7. Julio Garcia (USA)
8. Fernando Vargas (USA)
9. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)
10. Emmett Linton (USA)
11. Alex Bunema (USA)
12. Bronco McKart (USA)

WELTERWEIGHTS

Champ: Cory Spinks (USA)

1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. James Hare (ENG)
4. Jose Celaya (USA)
5. Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)
6. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
7. Teddy Reid (USA)
8. Rafael Pineda (COL)
9. Kermit Cintron (USA)
10. Michele Trabant (GER)
11. Christian Bladt (DEN)
12. Joe Hutchinson (USA)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS

Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)

1. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
4. Omar Weis (ARG)
5. Arturo Gatti (USA)
6. Mike Stewart (USA)
7. Miguel Cotto (USA)
8. Paul Spadafora (USA)
9. James Leija (USA)
10. DeMarcus Corley (USA)
11. Lovemore Ndou (AUSTRL)
12. Terrance Cauthen (USA)

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Champ: Vacant

1. Javier Jauregui (MEX)
2. Levander Johnson (USA)
3. Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)
4. Juan Lazcano (USA)
5. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
6. Julio Diaz (USA)
7. Courtney Burton (USA)
8. Michael Clark (USA)
9. Angel Manfredy (USA)
10. Juan Gomez Trinidad (PR)
11. Steve Johnston (USA)
12. Victoriano Sosa (DR)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS

Champ: Carlos Hernandez (USA)

1. Joel Casamayor (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Steve Forbes
4. Diego Corrales (USA)
5. David Santos (USA)
6. Phillip Ndou (SA)
7. Sirimongkol Singmanassak (THAI)
8. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
9. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
10. Nate Campbell (USA)
11. Janos Nagy (HUN)
12. Julio Pablo Chacon (ARG)

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Champ: Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)

1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
4. William Abelyan (USA)
5. Orlando Salido (MEX)
6. Michael Brodie (ENG)
7. In Jin Chi (KOR)
8. Zahir Raheem (USA)
9. Rocky Juarez (USA)
10. Victor Polo (COL)
11. Fahprakorb Rakkiatgym (THAI)
12. Humberto Soto (MEX)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS

Champ: Manny Pacquaio (PHIL)

1. Jose Luis Valbuena (ARG)
2. Vacant
3. Paulie Ayala (USA)
4. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
5. Israel Vazquez (MEX)
6. David Donis (USA)
7. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
8. Fernando Velardez (USA)
9. Willie Jorrin (USA)
10. Art Simonyan (USA)
11. Diego Morales (MEX)
12. Fahsung 3K Battery (THAI)

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Champ: Rafael Marquez (MEX)

1. Pete Frissina (USA)
2. Tim Austin (USA)
3. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)
4. Genaro Garcia (MEX)
5. Ratanachai Vorapin (THAI)
6. Roger Gonzalez (USA)
7. David Guerault (FRA)
8. Jorge Lacierva (USA)
9. Heriberto Ruiz (MEX)
10. Mauricio Pastrana (PAN)
11. Jose Aguiniga (USA)
12. Mauricio Martinez (PAN)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS

Champ: Luis Perez (NIC)

1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Felix Machado (VEN)
4. Luis Bolano (COL)
5. Martin Castillo (MEX)
6. Peter Culshaw (ENG)
7. Jose Navarro (USA)
8. Angel Priolo (COL)
9. Fernando Montiel (MEX)
10. Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)
11. Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)
12. Shoji Kimura (JAP)

FLYWEIGHTS

Champ: Irene Pacheco (COL)

1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Vic Darchinian (AUSTRL)
4. Hussein Hussein (LEB)
5. Jair Jimenez (COL)
6. Damaen Kelly (GB)
7. Takefumi Sakata (JAP)
8. Alejandro Montiel (MEX)
9. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
10. Luis Maldonado (MEX)
11. Masaki Kawabata (JAP)
12. Wandee Chareon (THAI)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS

Champ: Jose Burgos (MEX)

1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Fahlan Sakreerin (THAI)
4. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
5. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
6. Alexander Sanchez (PR)
7. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
8. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
9. Tatsuo Hatashida (JAP)
10. Shingo Yamaguchi (JAP)
11. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
12. Mhikiza Myekeni (SA)

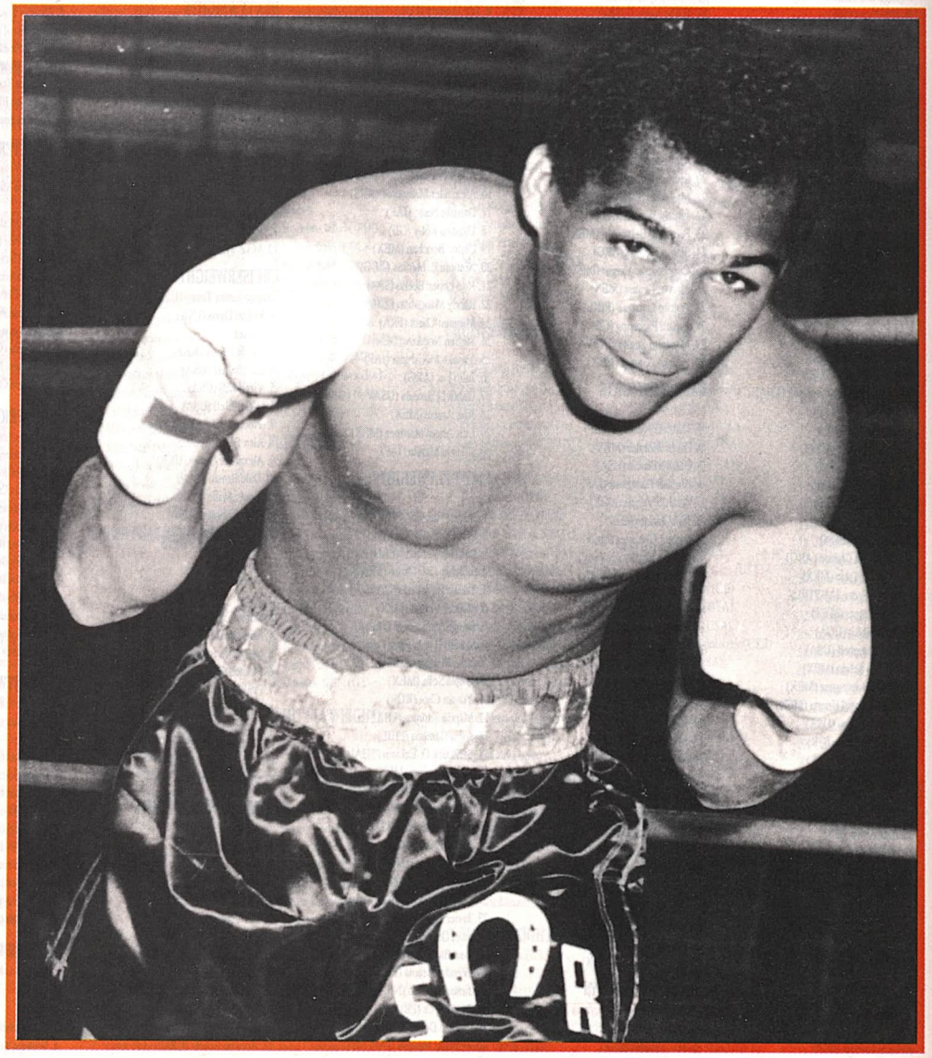
MINI FLYWEIGHTS

Champ: Daniel Reyes (COL)

1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Muhammad Rachman (INDO)
4. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
5. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
6. Edgar Cardenas (MEX)
7. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
8. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
9. Roberto Leyva (MEX)
10. Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)
11. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
12. Eriberto Gejon (PHIL)

"LIFE NOT SWEET..."

Featherweight King Writes Of Rise To Title And Past Glories Of Cuban Isle



By Sugar Ramos

(Editor's Note: This is a condensed version.)

The first time I came to Havana from my hometown of Matanzas, 75 miles away, I was a boy of 12. It was a big thrill. I never expected to travel. My family was poor and there were many of us. I was the youngest of 16 children, all boys. My parents christened me Ultiminio, "the last." They kept their promise.

My trip was a prize for winning the amateur flyweight boxing championship of my town. All the winners in the different divisions were taken, and the trip was arranged so as to bring us into Havana for the welterweight championship fight between Kid Gavilan, our world champion, and Billy Graham, the American.

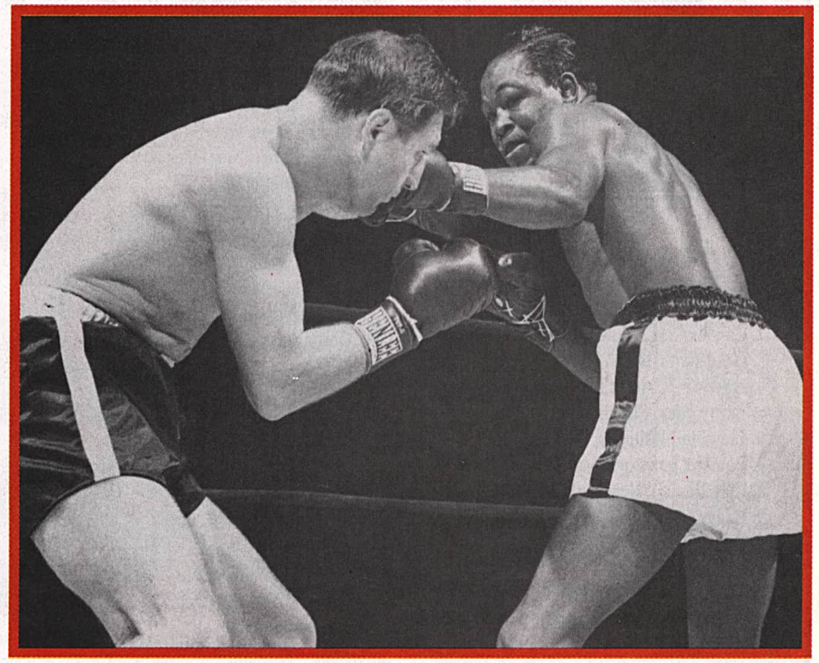
We made the trip in a bus that shook so much we could have been milkshakes by the time we arrived. But it is easier to ride such a bus with nothing in you. Only I didn't choose it that way. There just wasn't much on the table the day I went to Havana.

I did not stay hungry long after we arrived. The Sports Commission of Cuba was looking after us and we had a banquet.

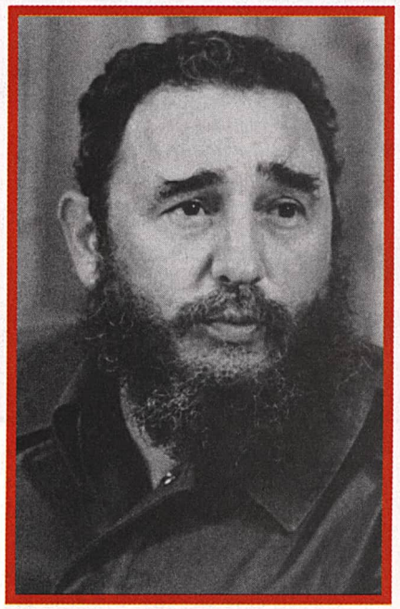
Then they took us to the baseball stadium, not in a shaky old bus like that other one, but in a new one for the use of all athletes under the direction of the commission, which took in baseball, track and field, and other sports.

Going into the park was exciting. There were thousands of people in the stands and the bright lights for night baseball were on. They put us in seats on the field not very far from the ring.

The people around us didn't have any trouble guessing we were country-boy amateur champions. Soon they were making jokes. I was easily the smallest, and one man said: "Little one, are you here to make a challenge to Gavilan?" I did not have the boldness to talk to a stranger, but I said to my friend: "If Gavilan makes my weight, I fight him." My friend repeated it. He had a loud voice. Everybody heard him and laughed.



The first pro fight Ramos ever saw involved revered Cuban welterweight champ Kid Gavilan and American Billy Graham. Ramos was so disappointed by Gavilan's showing, he promised himself he would never fight in a way that was displeasing to fans.



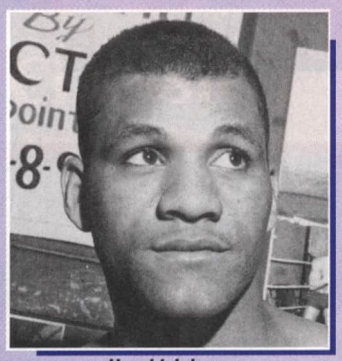
Ramos blamed dictator Fidel Castro for ruining boxing in Cuba. When Castro banned pro boxing in Cuba in the early-'60s, Ramos decided to leave his native land for Mexico.

The baseball lights went down and soon the fight show was on. Gavilan surprised me. Instead of forcing the fight, he ducked and dodged, and the only punches he threw were jabs or quick hooks. Graham was the forcer, but he could not catch Gavilan. So it went for 15 rounds, Gavilan winning in what he turned into a bad fight.

The Cuban public cheered the American. They whistled at Gavilan, and the whistle in Cuba is what you call the Bronx cheer.

As I watched, a thought ran through my mind: "Senor Ramos, if you win a championship some day, do not fight like this. A champion owes much to the public; they owe him nothing."

THE RING RATINGS, June 1963



Harold Johnson

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Sonny Liston, Chicago, IL
1. **Floyd Patterson,** Scarsdale, NY
2. **Cassius Clay,** Louisville, KY
3. **Doug Jones,** New York, NY
4. **Ingemar Johansson,** Sweden
5. **Zora Folley,** Chandler, AZ
6. **Cleveland Williams,** Houston, TX
7. **Robert Cleroux,** Canada
8. **Billy Daniels,** New York, NY
9. **Henry Cooper,** England
10. **Ernest Terrell,** Philadelphia, PA

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Harold Johnson, Philadelphia, PA
1. **Mauro Mina,** Peru
2. **Giulio Rinaldi,** Italy
3. **Eddie Cotton,** Seattle, WA
4. **Bobo Olson,** Honolulu, HI
5. **Erich Schoppner,** Germany
6. **Henry Hank,** Detroit, MI
7. **Willie Pastrano,** Miami, FL
8. **Wayne Thornton,** Fresno, CA
9. **Gustav Scholz,** Germany
10. **Chic Calderwood,** Scotland

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champs: Paul Pender, Brookline, MA
Dick Tiger, Nigeria
1. **Gene Fullmer,** West Jordan, UT
2. **Terry Downes,** England
3. **George Benton,** Philadelphia, PA
4. **Joey Giardello,** Cherry Hill, NJ
5. **Laszlo Papp,** Hungary
6. **Luis Folledo,** Spain
7. **Denny Moyer,** Portland, OR
8. **Ted Wright,** Detroit, MI
9. **Joey Archer,** New York, NY
10. **Joe Gonzalez,** New York, NY

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Luis Rodriguez, Miami, FL
1. **Emile Griffith,** New York, NY
2. **Brian Curvis,** Wales
3. **Ralph Dupas,** New Orleans, LA
4. **Rip Randall,** Dallas, TX
5. **Federico Thompson,** Argentina
6. **Jorge Fernandez,** Argentina
7. **Curtis Cokes,** Dallas, TX
8. **Dick Turner,** Philadelphia, PA
9. **Joe Stable,** New York, NY
10. **Gaspar Ortega,** Mexico

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Eddie Perkins,** Gary, IN
2. **Kenny Lane,** Muskegon, MI
3. **Louis Molina,** San Jose, CA
4. **Roberto Cruz,** Philippines
5. **Angel Garcia,** France
6. **Battling Torres,** Mexico
7. **Manuel Alvarez,** Argentina
8. **Jose Napoles,** Mexico
9. **Aissa Hashas,** France
10. **Bobby Scanlon,** Sacramento, CA

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Carlos Ortiz, New York, NY
1. **Bunny Grant,** Jamaica
2. **Carlos Hernandez,** Venezuela
3. **Dave Charnley,** England
4. **Doug Vaillant,** Cuba
5. **Alfredo Urbina,** Mexico
6. **Paul Armstead,** Los Angeles, CA
7. **Joe Brown,** Houston, TX
8. **Teruo Kosaka,** Japan
9. **Arthur Persley,** Red Crosse, LA
10. **Sebastiao Nascimento,** Brazil

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Gabriel (Flash) Elorde, Philippines
1. **Love Allotey,** Ghana
2. **Johnny Bizzarro,** Erie, PA
3. **Auburn Copeland,** Flint, MI
4. **Ray Nobile,** Italy
5. **Yukio Katsumato,** Japan
6. **Jose Luis Cruz,** Mexico
7. **Vicente Derado,** Argentina
8. **Mel Middleton,** Philadelphia, PA
9. **Oscar Reyes,** Philippines
10. **Wally Taylor,** Australia

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Sugar Ramos, Mexico
1. **Howard Winstone,** Wales
2. **Mitsunori Seki,** Japan
3. **Rafiu King,** Nigeria
4. **Kazuo Takayama,** Japan
5. **Don Johnson,** Los Angeles, CA
6. **Jet Bally,** Philippines
7. **Danny Valdez,** Los Angeles, CA
8. **Billy Calvert,** England
9. **Alberto Serti,** Italy
10. **Floyd Robertson,** Ghana

BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Eder Jofre, Brazil
1. **Ismael Laguna,** Panama
2. **Joe Medel,** Mexico
3. **Alphonse Halimi,** France
4. **Fighting Harada,** Japan
5. **Piero Rollo,** Italy
6. **Katsutoshi Aoki,** Japan
7. **Freddie Gilroy,** Ireland
8. **Pierre Cossemyns,** Belgium
9. **Ronnie Jones,** Chicago, IL
10. **Jorge Salazar,** Mexico

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Pone Kingpetch, Thailand
1. **Salvatore Burruni,** Italy
2. **Bernardo Caraballo,** Colombia
3. **Hiroyuki Ebihara,** Japan
4. **Pascual Perez,** Argentina
5. **Ramon Arias,** Venezuela
6. **Horacio Accavallo,** Argentina
7. **Mimun Ben Ali,** Spain
8. **Chatchai Laemfapha,** Thailand
9. **Natalio Jiminez,** Dominican Republic
10. **Ernesto Miranda,** Argentina

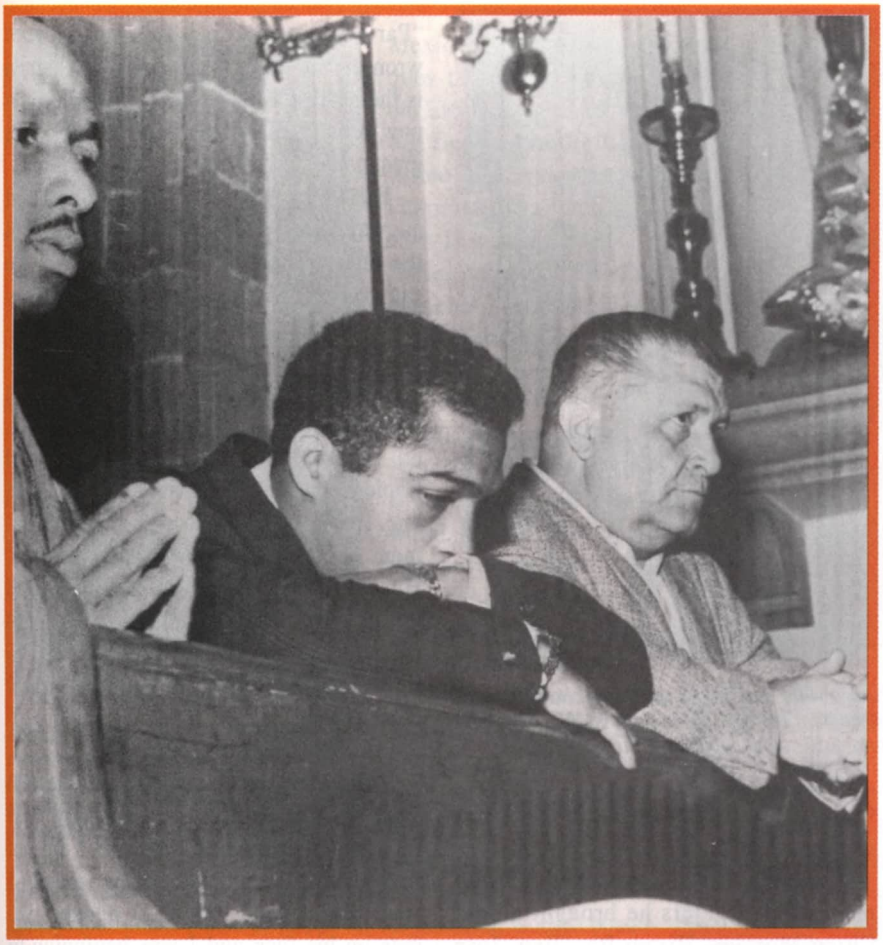
Since that night, many things have happened. Gavilan lost face with the Cuban people and he never again had a big fight in Havana. Then, after Gavilan was finished, Fidel Castro came to power.

For a while, it seemed he liked boxing. Then he issued an order, "no more professional boxing." By then, I was professional featherweight champion and I could have stayed as instructor of amateur fighters, which is all that's left. But I wanted to continue my professional career and I did not remain in Cuba.

Now I live in Mexico City and I box wherever I can to advance myself in my profession. In the five years I have been fighting as a professional, I never have suffered a legitimate defeat.

As a Cuban, I cannot think of myself alone. I think often of what this man Castro has done to boxing in my country, among other things. He has destroyed a sport that brought much recognition to Cuba all over the world.

I am in Mexico City with Cucu Conde, my good friend since I turned professional in 1957, and one of the men who used to



Cucu Conde, seated to Ramos' left, promoted the Cuban since he turned professional in 1957. Conde stood by his fighter through good times and bad, like here when Ramos was praying for Davey Moore, who died after a featherweight title bout with Ramos in '63.

help Cuban boxing as a promoter and broadcaster. Cucu is many years older than I am and his experience goes back many more years. When we sit together in his room at the Virreyes Hotel in Mexico City, he tells me interesting stories of the golden days when boxing boomed in Havana.

There were clubs everywhere, in Santa Clara, Pinar del Rio, Santiago de Cuba, Cienfuegos, Bayamo, Ranchuelo, and in my own Matanzas. You have only to mention a fair-sized town, and Cucu knows of fights there.

But the heart of everything was Havana. Foreign fighters came in from the States, from Europe, from Central, and South America. And Cuban boxing was well run. There was encouragement for boys to become professionals.

The Sports Commission knew its business. Cuba was the first country to have a complete medical examination of fighters before fights. It was wide-awake and modern when very few others were. For example, any time a man was seriously hurt or cut, he was assured of free hospital treatment. Or, if he just needed rest, he could stay in the hospital for as long as he wished.

I was around to see the commission's medical setup and to know what good care they took of fighters. There was a large staff of doctors. As soon as you were licensed, a file was installed on you. They kept track of your general health. Preliminary fighters were given vitamins to raise their level of stamina. If you had a cold, you could get free injections.

There also was justice for fighters who felt their best interests weren't being protected by their managers. A boy who made a complaint was asked to come in with the manager. The commission listened patiently to both sides. Then there was a ruling, one way or the other. And it had to be lived up to by the manager if he expected to continue managing in Cuba.

The commission had its own ratings according to experience, performance, and so forth. Any fight that didn't shape up as an even contest was not permitted. Some promoters did not like this. The good promoters, who weren't fooling the public, liked such strictness.

Cucu promoted for 11 years in Havana

Ramos felt a strong connection with other Cuban fighters, like Luis Rodriguez, who supported Ramos after Sugar beat Moore in Los Angeles. When Cuban greats like Gavilan faded out, Rodriguez and Ramos carried the banner for Cuba.

When Ramos met Nigerian Rafiu King in a featherweight title bout in '63 (pictured), he knew how to defend against King's short left from a previous encounter the two had in Paris in '62. After winning the first fight by 10-round decision, Ramos scored a 15-round decision in the rematch.

and he still is grateful for the way he was treated by the Cuban commission. "They were always urging me to make bigger matches," he said. "When I could do it, I gladly did it."

When Florentino Fernandez was knocked out by Rocky Kalingo at Caracas, Venezuela, Cucu made the return for Havana. It drew $56,000. Florentino knocked out Kalingo and was re-established not just for Cuba, but also for the U.S.

Our fighters were important attractions in this country and there always was some new one coming up. When Gavilan faded out, Isaac Logart developed. When Logart began to slide, it was Florentino, and then Benny Paret and Luis Rodriguez who became popular.

Benny had good luck in getting his chance to win the welterweight title, bad luck in that sad fight with Emile Griffith. Rodriguez, who is my stablemate under Angelo Dundee's handling, is the smartest, the fastest, the best all-around welterweight in the world.

I was in the very last batch of Cuban boys to come up before the picture changed. There are real good ones among these. There's Doug Vaillant, for one. Another strong contender in a year or so will be Jose Stable, who has grown into a welterweight. This is a powerful fellow who could turn out to be one of those nonstop punchers.

For Cucu, there are memories of all the main event fighters he brought along: Chico Morales, Hiram Bacallao, Jose Napoles, Enrique Hitchman, Pedro Miranda, Orlando Echevarria, Fernando Silva, Gallito del Ring, Chuchu Gutierrez, Jose Ramon Flores, and Pupy Garcia. Then there are prospects who did not have the opportunity to become mature but who had ability to take them all the way, such as Antonio Carmona, Juvenal Minguez, Juan Flores, Tano Marrero, Manola Mora, Sal Fuentes, Santos Menendez, Chino Almeida, Ignacio Perez, Zapatero Rancourt, Papy Ferreiro, and Johnny Sardui.

In Mexico, I meet many who used to come to Cuba to fight for Cucu—Kid Anahuac, Baby Vasquez, Marinero Celis, and Chucho Hernandez. They talk of Havana as if it was their home city. They enjoyed coming there ... the marvelous climate, the wonderful restaurants, the nightlife, the friendliness that was everywhere.

One of the boxers Cucu had made into a star was Robinson Garcia, who now lives in Paris. The other day Cucu got a letter from him. Garcia said he is doing nicely there. He is married to a French girl and has children, but one of the things he wrote caught me in the throat. He said: "Paris is a warm city, but people were wrong when they used to say that Havana is the nearest thing to Paris. What I know now is that Paris is the nearest thing to the great place we knew as Havana."

But you cannot live in the past, and anyway, I'm young enough to believe in the future. There may be a day when we can go back. My loved ones are there, my wife and two children, and all my brothers.

I'm 22 years old and nobody has a better background in boxing. When I started in Havana, my trainer was Kid Rapidez, an old Cuban fighter and a good one. He had a lot to do with the development of Paret, Stable, Garcia, Napoles, Hitchman, and Pedro Miranda. He's with me in Mexico. And, naturally, I've got Cucu, who's promoting in Mexico, to guide me along with Angelo. Cucu changed my name from Ultiminio to Sugar. Ultiminio is too hard to say.

After I left Havana, I boxed in Panama. Then I came to Mexico City. My first fight was with Juanito Ramirez. I did not find him hard to hit and, for four rounds, I gave him a good licking. I opened two cuts on his face and I was beginning to wonder if they wouldn't stop it.

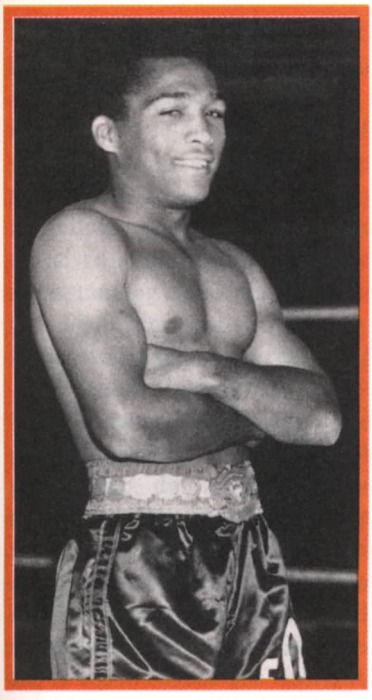
With the fifth round coming up, they turned up the red lights on the ringpost, which is a signal that the fight's over. I was congratulating myself on having scored a knockout in my Mexican debut. Then I heard the announcer say: "Ramirez, the winner on a foul!"

The newspapers called it the worst boxing scandal in years. Two days later, the commission reversed the referee to this extent—I wasn't a loser. It was ruled a technical draw.

Later the same year, 1961, I was boxing Rafael Camacho in Puebla. Again, I punched the other fellow all over the ring, had him bleeding from the nose and from a cut over the right eye. I never had easier rounds. But after the fourth, the referee stopped it and gave it to Camacho on a foul!

It is bad enough to have things happen, but you would think that, with the uproar, we could have a return match. No, they're not interested. Camacho refused to box me again. So did Ramirez.

So I've swallowed my pride and taken the matches I could get. Last year in



After turning professional, Ramos traveled the world, fighting in Paris, Mexico City, and Los Angeles. But his heart still belonged to Cuba, where he was born and was first taught how to box.

Mexico I beat Baby Vasquez twice, and knocked out Eloy Sanchez. And in a big fight in the bullring, before a tremendous crowd, I knocked out a young puncher, Jose Luis Cruz, in the second round. In Los Angeles, I knocked out Eddie Garcia and Danny Valdez.

Last year in Paris, I fought Rafiu King, of Nigeria, one of the best featherweights in the world. King is a fast starter and moves cleverly. For a few rounds I was puzzled as to how to handle him. Then I said to Angelo: "I have him figured out; a straight left hand will find him. Watch." I began snapping the jab into his face. I doubled the jab; I tripled. Sure enough, he couldn't get out of the way. By the middle rounds, I had full control. Now I could experiment. I went to hooks off the jab. That worked beautifully.

In the last round, I shortened up my punches to put extra power into them, and I know I had him hurt and tired. Were this a 15-round fight, it would not have gone the distance. Voting is not announced in Paris, but I won clearly in my opinion—and in that of the reporters.

My slow start against King is part of my general pattern of fighting. I like to study a man, to gauge his speed and to note his habits. I find it's no risk. I know enough of defense to keep from being nailed too solidly. When I'm ready to make my moves, I can make up for lost time in a hurry.

I have been asked to describe my style of fighting. I do not go into the ring to slug; I do not run. I am a puncher when the situation calls for it. I am a boxer when that's the thing to do.

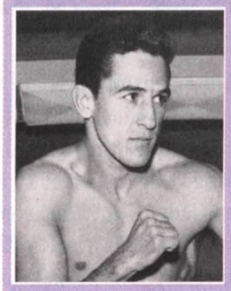
I will say this: I believe that the most effective punching always is done in combinations. Whether you're going for the body or the head, your best deal is to fire a series. Kid Rapidez, my trainer, long ago taught me that, "they can slip one punch. They cannot slip a bunch of them."

I have proof that my way of fighting brings results, both in my winning record and in my popularity. There always are requests for me to come back, whether it is Caracas, Paris, Los Angeles, or Panama.

My heart belongs to the country where I was born and to the unforgettable excitement I experienced when I first boxed main events in the Sports Palace in Havana. This was what you Americans call "big time"—but with something extra, the color and the drama that our Latin temperament gives to a spectacle. We had exciting fighters and the crowds to match. ■

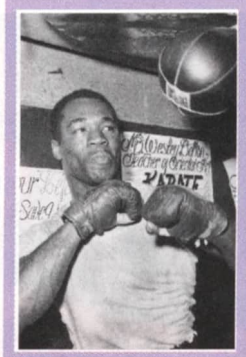
THE RING, June 1963

***The Cover*:** Cassius Clay was doing what he did best—sing his own praises. As heavyweight champion Sonny Liston prepared to defend the heavyweight belt in a rematch against Floyd Patterson, this young, brash kid named Clay was yelling to anyone willing to listen that he was the more deserving fighter to face Liston for the belt.



***Unstoppable Jofre*:** Eder Jofre successfully defended the world bantamweight title for the sixth time, scoring a third-round knockout over Japan's Katsutoshi Aoki in Tokyo. Jofre was outboxed the first two rounds, before landing a potent left hook that dramatically changed the fight. The victory was Jofre's 15th straight by knockout.

***Tunney Turns 65*:** THE RING celebrated the 65th birthday of former heavyweight champion Gene Tunney with a pictorial look at his boxing career and his life after retirement. Along with Rocky Marciano, Tunney was one of only two heavyweight champions to end his career with the title.



***Mina On The Move*:** Peruvian light heavyweight Mauro Mina set up a fight with light heavy champ Harold Johnson by dispatching Detroit's tough Henry Hank. Mina, making his American debut, turned to slugging against Hank, after realizing early in the fight that his original strategy of outboxing Hank wouldn't work. Instead, Mina put on a brutal display of powerpunching in claiming a 10-round decision.

***Fighter Of The Month*:** Carlos Ortiz received the honors by successfully defending the world lightweight title with a 13th-round kayo of Doug Vaillant, before 20,000 boisterous fans in San Juan, Puerto Rico. It was Ortiz' second title defense since beating Joe Brown for the lightweight belt back on April 21, 1962. It was also the second time in two years that Ortiz beat Vaillant.

THE FIGHT DOCTOR

BARRERA AND HIS BRAIN

By Margaret Goodman, MD

The licensure of every fighter has to be assessed on an individual basis. A boxing license is a privilege and not a right. A fighter has to prove his or her eligibility for a license. The news that Marco Antonio Barrera had undergone brain surgery in 1997 was earth-shattering. This is certainly something, to my knowledge, that has never been faced by a commission. However, what constitutes medical eligibility is often debated and argued, and there are no hard and fast rules. Unlike many other sports, the ill effects and dangers faced in boxing are rarely researched, so the data is small. The Texas Commission did what they felt was in the best interest of the boxer by allowing Barrera to fight Manny Pacquiao in San Antonio.

Barrera is certainly one of the most intelligent and articulate young men to have ever graced the sport. According to written reports, it is apparent that Marco approached his medical condition in the same way he approached his participation in boxing—with great care and preparation. It must be said, however, that irrespective of how many individuals evaluated Barrera as to his eligibility to box, none could really know the answer, because there are no similar, precedent-setting cases. We do not know the answer, but 16 fights safely accomplished by Barrera since his surgery speak volumes.

Fighters, just like all of us, have medical issues. Still, not every one of those problems precludes continuing in the sport. It is crucial that boxers always inform a commission of their medical history as well as medications/supplements they are taking. Commissions are not here to prevent fights, but rather ensure that those fights are safe and fair.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Barrera won 16 fights after having brain surgery, then came Pacquiao

DOCTOR'S MAILBAG

Q: I'm curious whether a physician ever watches a fighter's previous two or three fights before an upcoming bout to see if there has been a change in their ring behavior. For example, it was quite obvious to me that Michael Grant never attacked an opponent with the same confidence after losing to Lennox Lewis.

Craig Metcalfe,
Fort Washington, PA

A: One of the most important things ring physicians can do is familiarize themselves with each competitor's prior performances. I maintain a large

library of boxing films. When scheduled to work a card, I review the participants' records and films, and research articles. I also review Fight Fax, a private organization that maintains up-to-date lists of each fighter's record, opponents, when and where he fought and at what weight, and suspensions he has received. A ring physician can never have too much data. Also, a physician should never work with a preconceived notion as to the competitiveness of the fight, but understanding each fighter's history can only improve fairness. Fight films will also provide information as to how that fighter walks, talks, and reacts to punches.

As you mentioned, lack of confidence is often responsible for a change in ring behavior, but an experienced, well-prepared ring physician should be able to distinguish a decline in performance due to deterioration in skills as opposed to a change in confidence.

Q: What is the correct way to use an Enswell to reduce swelling? In the Evander Holyfield-Hasim Rahman fight, it looked as if Rahman's corner was using the Enswell as a weapon against him.

Leslie Madsen, Bellevue, WA

A: An Enswell is a heavy, handheld piece of metal used by cornermen to reduce facial swelling during a contest. If used incorrectly, it can further damage the underlying facial tissue and, as a result, increase puffiness. The skin around the eye is extremely delicate and loose. When injured from punches or a cut, there is an outpouring of fluid and blood into the surrounding area. Typically, this manifests as a hematoma, as seen on Joe Mesi is his recent fight against Monte Barrett. Since the corner has less than a minute to reduce the swelling, it is imperative they apply firm, direct pressure with an ice-cold Enswell or ice bag. The commonly used stroking motion to somehow *relocate* the swelling will only increase damage to the surrounding area, and within a few seconds of the next round, the amount of swelling will increase and further risk obstruction of the boxer's vision.

Q: What does it mean from a medical perspective when experts say a boxer has "no legs"?

Mark Faulkner, Tampa, FL

A: A fighter who has "lost his legs" can mean he is tired, dehydrated, out of shape, or injured. Figuring out the right answer can save a life. Connections from the brain travel through the spinal cord and tell your legs what to do. Have you ever seen a boxer alert and awake, but his reflexes have slowed? Too many punches over the years and frequent or numerous knockouts can damage the brain's balance centers. As a result, a fighter uses a wider and wider stance and has an increased susceptibility to being knocked down. A sad but true fact: The simplest way to illustrate ring age is when an experienced boxer loses his legs early in a bout.

Q: As an amateur coach, many of my students are in the 8- to-14-year-old range. What special precautions should a coach take with adolescents? Can sudden growth spurts weaken a child? At what point am I overtraining a preteen?

William Wells, Santa Rosa, CA

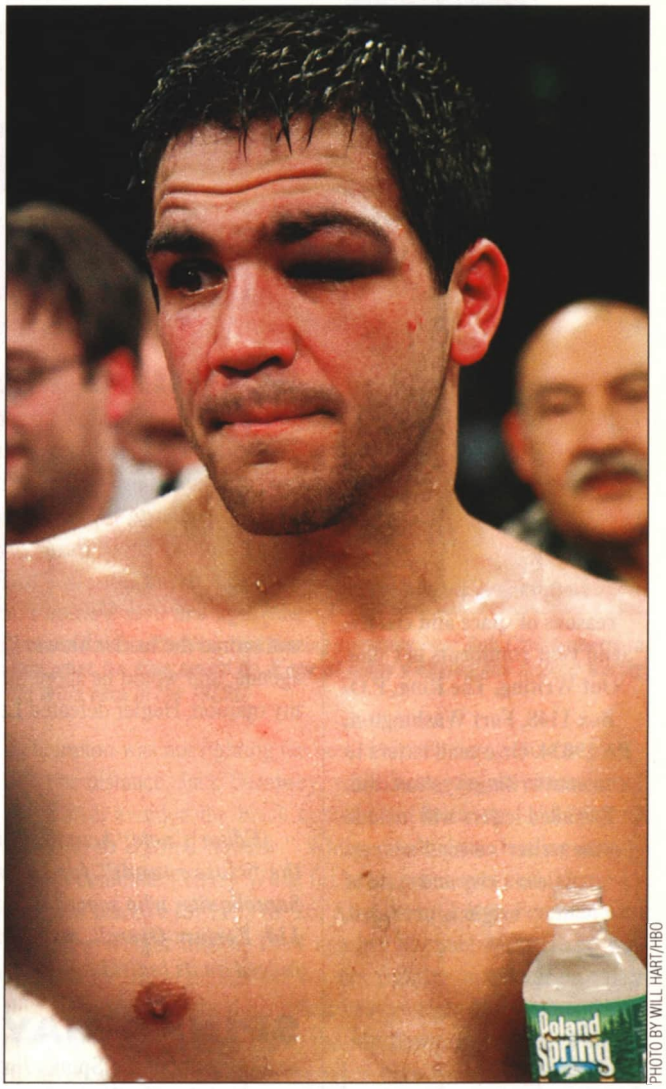


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Mesi suffered a hematoma on his left eye in the Barrett fight

A: Just as a nine- to 10-year-old child should not be using all his force to throw a fastball, a child should not be hitting a heavybag. In children and young adolescents still growing in height, pathological conditions can occur just below the knee. These are usually self-limited and cause no permanent damage. However, recognition is crucial. If an athlete, be he 10 years old or 30 years old, is experiencing swelling or redness after physical exercise or training, activity should be stopped until he can receive medical evaluation and treatment. Persistent pain and normal X-rays can represent a stress fracture requiring more sophisticated evaluation. Symptoms lasting more than three to five days should always raise concern. ■

Dr. Goodman will be happy to answer more questions about the medical aspects of boxing in future columns. Please send inquiries to: The Fight Doctor, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19304

COME OUT WRITING

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

SCORING FLASHBACK

I found it interesting that in an article re-printed from THE RING August 1987 ("Sugar Ray ... Still In Style") that appeared in the December '03 issue, Nigel Collins points out that "those who enjoy slick boxing" probably scored the Leonard-Hagler fight for Sugar Ray. In fact, Collins himself scored the bout 115-113 for Leonard. He even writes that "boxing seems to be undergoing a gradual metamorphosis away from" rewarding harder punching while moving toward rewarding "slick boxing." In a recent issue of THE RING, however, Collins seems to argue that the controversial Ricardo Mayorga win over Vernon Forrest was, in fact, justified because Mayorga was clearly the aggressor and scored the harder blows. I'm wondering, has Collins changed his opinion in regard to his scoring agenda, and would he score the Hagler-Leonard fight any differently 16 years later? (By the way, in my opinion, Hagler defeated Leonard soundly.)

DARREN PAULSON
Vacaville, CA

[Editor's note: Actually, what I wrote was that those who enjoy slick boxing probably scored the "close rounds" for Leonard. Mayorga-Forrest II was covered by Associate Editor Joe Santoliquito, who scored it 115-113, Mayorga, from his ringside seat. My TV scorecard was 116-114, Forrest. Overall, my scoring philosophy has not changed over the years. Each fight must be judged on its individual merits, and yes, I still think Leonard won the fight by a couple of points.]

SPINKS-MAYORGA REACTION

Forget about the Spinks Jinx. Ricardo Mayorga was done in by the *Sports Illustrated* Jinx! For a magazine that barely covers the sport of boxing, I find it funny that when they do decide to cover a fighter in detail, that fighter loses his next fight. It happened to Zab Judah, and it has now happened to Mayorga. A word to the wise: If *SI* comes calling, avoid them like a Mike Tyson hook.

JOE SCRIMENTI
Joescr11@yahoo.com

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Cory Spinks' upset of Ricardo Mayorga (pictured) has generated quite a bit of mail, including letters from Joe Scrimenti and Joey Intravia. Scrimenti points to the fact that a feature in* Sports Illustrated *virtually doomed Mayorga to defeat, while Intravia feels the Nicaraguan has to improve his technique and go to the body more to beat clever boxers.

While watching the Cory Spinks-Ricardo Mayorga fight, it was easy to see that Mayorga, as exciting as he has been to the fans, is an easy mark for fighters who can control the distance and the pace. If Mayorga can't learn to cut the ring off, or at least go strong to the body, he will have a hard way to go against fighters with the skills Spinks possesses. Still, throughout it all, Mayorga never let up; he just fell short. And in the end Mayorga showed a very classy side of his personality by giving Spinks his respects and his belts. Hats off to you, Ricardo. We need more fighters like you.

JOEY INTRAVIA
Bethpage, NY

REID RIP-OFF

This is the first time I've written to THE RING. I am doing so in order to express my disgust at the standard of refereeing and judging during the Sven Ottke-Robin Reid fight. Instead of watching championship boxing, I felt like I was witnessing highway robbery. Every single cliched story about having to knock a man out in Germany to get a draw now seems a reality. The referee clearly favored the hometown fighter, and ultimately, so did the judges. Reid clearly won the fight; he landed the cleaner, harder punches all night, but he got nothing. This isn't simply a British boxing fan expressing sour grapes. I think I speak for anyone who saw the fight.

Also kudos to THE RING for its championship policy and its crusade "to restore integrity to championship boxing."

ROBERT JONES
Stafford, England

Harry Wills and Jack Dempsey shake hands with New York boxing commissioner Bob Christenberry in 1954. Reader Eric Wong wonders what THE RING would do if one of today's champions ducked worthy contenders the way Dempsey did Wills back in the 1920s.

THANKS, DOC

Thank you very much for the "Fight Doctor" column in THE RING EXTRA. I am an amateur boxing coach and remove every one of Dr. Goodman's columns and post them on the wall of my gym. I am glad that THE RING and the Dr. Goodman have taken on the important responsibility of informing the public about the safety and health of boxers. It is far too easy to watch a boxing match and overlook the danger that these men and women place themselves in.

BILL WELLS
Santa Rosa, CA

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

I will surely miss George Foreman on HBO's *World Championship Boxing*. He is occasionally labeled as "goofy" or "biased," but he makes great comments and talks from the boxer's point of view. He also balances out the announcing team. It is always interesting to hear Larry Merchant and George debating. It breaks my heart that Foreman will not be with us for this year's bouts. I can't possibly imagine a person who can fill his spot.

SHIN HOZUMI
Honolulu, HI

HOLDING CHAMPS ACCOUNTABLE

First, let me say that I value THE RING belt more than those of the alphabet organizations. It's clear to any boxing fan that the organizations can be easily corrupted and that their ratings do not always show who is the top fighter in each division. However, I would like to know what THE RING would do in certain situations if a champion was not fighting the best or simply being too inactive.

For instance, Jack Dempsey, while heavyweight champion of the world, avoided the black contenders, declaring he'd "pay no attention to colored fighters." While avoiding the leading heavyweight contender, Harry Wills, for years because of this, Dempsey also was inactive for 1923 to '26. Also, after George Foreman won the heavyweight title in 1994 against Michael Moorer, he was stripped by the organizations for not fighting mandatories. After this, he mostly defended his linear heavyweight title against fringe contenders and guys barely in the top dozen in the heavyweight division, while not fighting the other elite heavyweights such as Riddick Bowe, Evander Holyfield, Lennox Lewis, and Mike Tyson. What would THE RING have done in this situation?

ERIC WONG
San Francisco, CA

[Editor's note: In instances such as the ones you describe, THE RING would berate the offending champion in print and try to persuade and/or embarrass him into doing the right thing. While this is far from a perfect method, it does not harm the sport, which is something that cannot be said about the alphabet organizations' system of stripping champions. For a full-fledged discussion of the subject, I refer you to the April 2002 issue in which THE RING's new championship policy was announced and the reasoning behind it was explained in detail.]

PUMPED FOR MOSLEY-WRIGHT

I saw on ESPN that Winky Wright and Sugar Shane Mosley will be fighting in March. Fantastic! Kudos to Mosley for fighting Wright. Shane has never fought a southpaw as tough as Winky, and this has the makings of a classic. It is refreshing to see the top fighters take on top-flight competition.

DAVID JOENKS
Santa Clara, CA ■

LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

LOOKING TO EXTEND HIS GUINN-ING STREAK

The man **Dominick Guinn** would like to fight more than anybody is **Joe Mesi**, but Guinn, the hottest up-and-comer in the heavyweight division, has his doubts about whether Mesi will ever fight him. Guinn, after all, was the last person to hang a loss on Mesi, outpointing "Baby Joe" in 1997 in Mesi's final amateur bout. As Guinn recalls it, he "boxed Mesi's head off the whole five rounds," convincing him to give up on the amateurs and turn pro.

Three years later, Guinn turned pro also, and both fighters now stand undefeated atop the heavyweight prospect pack, poised perhaps to become top-10 contenders in another fight or two. In his last fight, Mesi took a small step forward by narrowly outpointing veteran **Monte Barrett** at Madison Square Garden. And as much as Guinn would love to fight Mesi next, "The Southern Disaster" is taking the next-best option: He'll aim to indirectly prove his superiority over Mesi by directly proving his superiority over Barrett on March 27 on an HBO *Boxing After Dark* broadcast from Guinn's native Arkansas.

Guinn: Wants Mesi, taking Barrett

"Barrett's dangerous, he's tough," Guinn acknowledged. "I sparred with him quite a bit about a year ago while I was getting ready to fight **Otis Tisdale** (on February 1, 2003). We sparred probably about 25 rounds. The rounds were pretty competitive; he wasn't going to give up, and I wasn't going to give up. He's got a sneaky left hook and a strong right hand. He's another good, credible opponent for me."

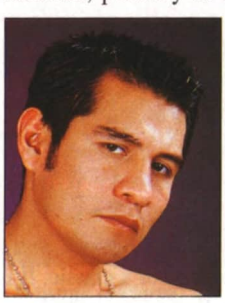
Assuming he gets by Barrett at the Alltel Arena in Little Rock, and assuming he can't land a top-prospects showdown with Mesi, Guinn, who's already beaten top-30 types **Michael Grant** and **Duncan Dokiwari**, wants to step up and start facing top-10 types next. From **Jameel McCline** to **Chris Byrd**, Guinn is calling out the division's most proven contenders.

"If I plan on being the champion of the world, I have to face these guys," Guinn said. "Ain't no way I can step back. I have to keep moving forward.

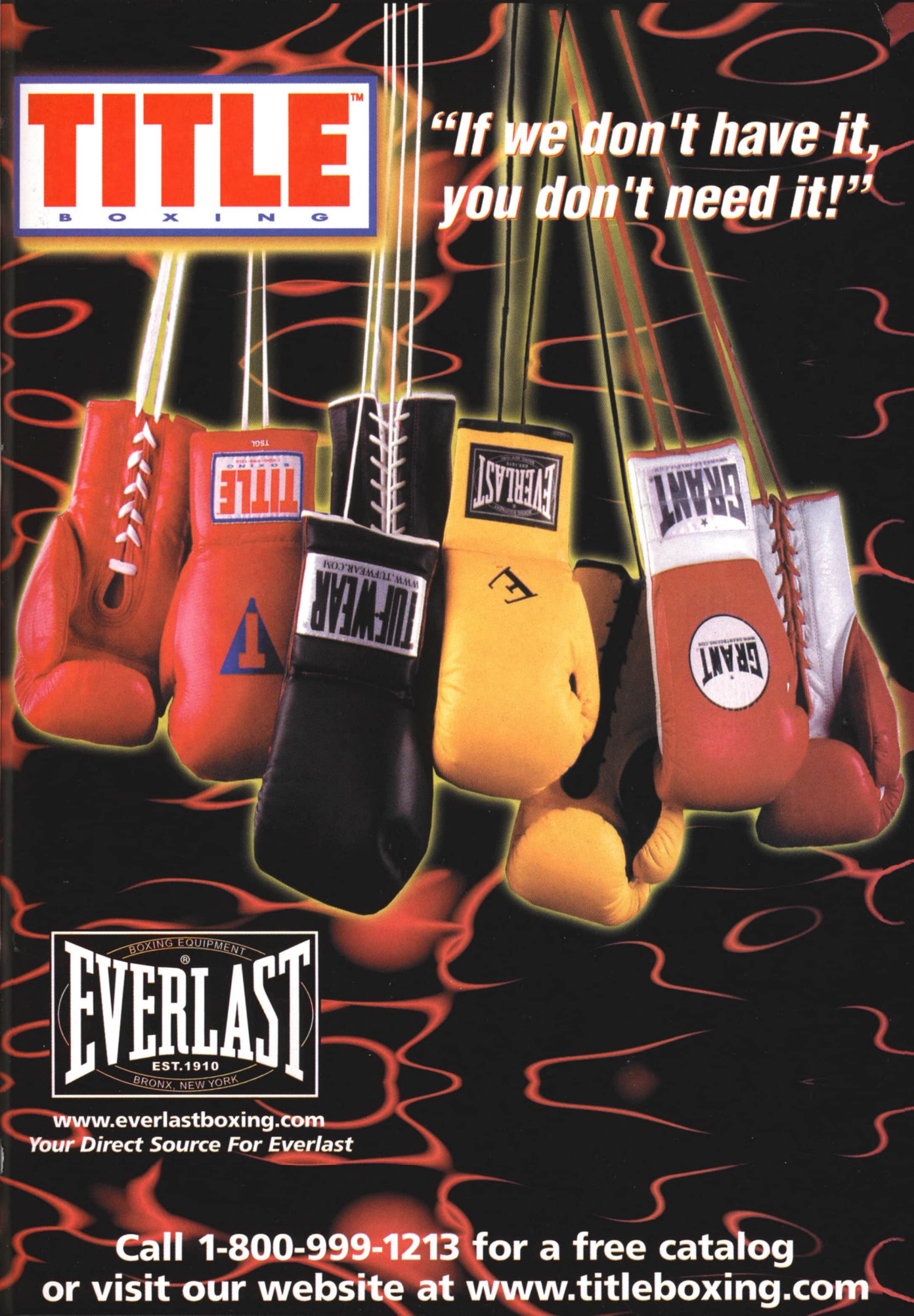
"But I'm in no rush. I'm just 28, I'm just entering the prime years for a heavyweight. Maybe I'll get a title shot this year, but if I don't, I've got next year. For sure, though, by 2005, you will see me fighting for the heavyweight title."

LISTEN UP

In the co-feature to Guinn-Barrett, Little Rock's middleweight phenom **Jermain Taylor** takes on steady junior middleweight contender **Alex Bunema**. It's not exactly a mouth-watering matchup, but it's at least a step up from blown-up welterweight **Derrell Coley**, who was going to be Taylor's opponent until media criticism encouraged promoter **Lou DiBella** to look for a stiffer challenge … **Emanuel Steward** told the Associated Press in January that he expects heavyweight champ **Lennox Lewis** to grant **Vitali Klitschko** a rematch, possibly as early as April 24 … Lightweight king **Floyd Mayweather's** division-hopping-hyping continues, as he's been talking lately about his next fight being at junior welterweight, welterweight, or possibly even junior middleweight. If he does leap all the way to 154 pounds in an effort to prove he deserves a shot at **Oscar De La Hoya**, it appears **Raul Marquez** is the opponent "Pretty Boy Floyd" would like to test the waters against. Whoever and wherever on the scale he fights, pencil in May 8 for the date … **Marco Antonio Barrera's** comeback will begin on the March 13 **Shane Mosley-Winky Wright** undercard, and if the former featherweight king defeats his carefully selected opponent, a summer pay-per-view bout with **Paulie Ayala** is being discussed. Let's be honest, though: While Barrera-Ayala is a solid matchup, how many fans are really going to dole out PPV money for a bout between two slightly faded featherweights on the comeback trail? ■



Barrera: The comeback begins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